



THE_COMPLETE _RADIOHEAD

Enter here to experience the full panoply of their revolutions in the head. From their earliest fumbblings to *In Rainbows*, the story behind every album, every track, everything. With side orders of anxiety, paranoia and decapitated heads.



On A Friday in November 1991, just before they became Radiohead: (from left) Thom Yorke, Colin Greenwood, Ed O'Brien, Jonny Greenwood, Phil Selway.

GROWING PAINS



Now, of course, there is *In Rainbows*, *OK Computer* and a reputation as weighty as any in modern music. Before all that, though, there were brown polo-neck jumpers and songs about chickens.

WORDS: TOM DOYLE

They may be one of music's most visionary outfits, but Radiohead are, at heart, a school band. They met at the private Abingdon School, an imposing, Gothic-turreted building situated in the market town of the same name, eight miles down the River Thames from Oxford. Established in 1256, Abingdon has produced its share of renowned old boys, including former Conservative Party Chairman Francis Maude and various ambassadors and diplomats, as well as Peep Show comedian David Mitchell.

They began playing together in 1986, rehearsing in the school music rooms at the end of the week, hence their initial name: On A Friday. They all knew one another even before forming the band. Older than the rest, 18-year-old drummer Phil Selway was part of a gang of school bullies who had picked on younger students, including bookish 16-year-old bass player Colin Greenwood and his shy younger brother Jonny. Amiable beanpole guitarist Ed O'Brien knew that Colin Greenwood's shirty friend – and On A Friday's future singer – Thom Yorke once fancied his sister. The first time O'Brien encountered Yorke was during a "tense" dress rehearsal for a school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which O'Brien was acting and Yorke was providing the music.

"Thom and this other fella were jamming freeform cod jazz throughout it," O'Brien later recalled. "The director stopped the play and shouted up to this scaffold tower they were playing on, trying to find out what the hell was going on. Thom started shouting down, I don't know what the fuck we're supposed to be playing. And this was to a teacher."

When Thom Yorke wasn't going toe-to-toe with his teachers, he could usually be found in one of Abingdon's School's music rooms. "It was great," he recalled. "No one came down there. There were these little tiny rooms with sound-proofed cubicles. That's where I spent most of my time."

Music had been Yorke's main passion since childhood. His parents had given him a cheap acoustic guitar at the age of eight and soon he began attempting to emulate his unlikely idol, poodle-haired Queen guitarist Brian May. "I wanted to be him," he admitted. "I went into a guitar lesson and I said, I wanna be a pop star."

The dreams were more fun than his unsettled upbringing: Yorke was born on 7 October 1968 in the Northamptonshire town of Wellingborough, but his father's job selling chemical equipment had meant the family had uprooted to Scotland before moving back down to Oxford in 1978. By the time he began attending the town's Standlake Primary, he was already on his third school. Inevitably, his itinerant childhood made it difficult to make friends. "There's a pervading sense of loneliness I've had since the day I was born," he admitted.

It wasn't helped by bullying. Born with his left eyelid closed, he'd undergone five operations, the last – in his words – "fucked up" by the surgeon, leaving it partly paralysed and forcing him to wear an eyepatch for a year. When Yorke started Abingdon in 1980, his drooping eyelid and angular features earned him the cruel nickname of "Salamander". Not that he didn't defend himself. Having been taught some boxing moves by his father, he often lashed out at his tormentors.

Portrait of the artist as a young man: Yorke in 1988.



'I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO BE A STAR.' THOM YORKE

“I never won,” he said. “I was into the idea of fighting. I suppose I’m quite an aggressive person. I’ve had to calm down a bit, otherwise I’d go nuts.”

Instead, he channelled his energies into music. At the age of 10, he formed an unnamed duo with another Standlake pupil. Setting the template for what was to come, his first song wasn’t a fumbling ditty about girls. Rather, Yorke penned *Mushroom Cloud*, about the dreadful beauty of a nuclear explosion.

As he grew older, Yorke’s outlook was further shaped by his love-hate relationship with his hometown and its student populace. Despite attending Abingdon as a day-boy, his background as the son of a salesman placed him firmly on the “town” side of Oxford’s “town and gown” divide.

“Oxford is a place where you have a plan and then you go out and you never, ever achieve it,” he said. “You just walk around in circles. Seeing these fuckers [*students*] walking around in their ballgowns, throwing up on the street, being obnoxious to the population... They don’t know they’re born and they’re going to run the country. It’s scary.”

His formative years weren’t all grim. Just before leaving Abingdon in 1987, he received prizes for art and music. “It was the first time I’d ever had any encouragement,” he remembered. At the year’s closing Symposium Revue, Yorke appeared onstage performing a song – its title long forgotten – solo with an acoustic guitar. Schoolmate Rick Clark remembered that he “really impressed the audience”.

Thom Yorke and Colin Greenwood first bonded at Abingdon over a shared love of Joy Division. It was the early ’80s, and they would go to teenage parties together, experimenting with the dubious fashions of the day: berets, ruffled shirts, crushed velvet suits, even a lick of mascara. For a while they played together in a punk-

influenced band named TNT, with Yorke ranting into a microphone taped to a broom handle.

Gradually, the future members of On A Friday entered their orbit. Ed O’Brien was first, the pair more impressed with his striking, Morrissey-esque quiff than his skills as a guitarist. The trio began jamming along to a clapped-out drum machine before O’Brien eventually plucked up the courage to enlist the services of the older Phil Selway.

By 1986, the quartet had christened themselves On A Friday. Also attending their music-room rehearsals was Colin’s younger brother Jonny. An introverted 15-year-old with a thatch of black hair and razor-sharp cheekbones, the younger Greenwood was a classically trained musical prodigy who had taken viola

lessons as a youngster and could turn his hand to any instrument. He was desperate to join his big brother’s band, though he was too bashful to ask. Instead, he would lurk on the fringes of the rehearsal room, shyly doodling away on an assortment of musical instruments.

“He’d be like, Look, I can play *this*,” recalled brother Colin, “and he’d whip out another instrument.”

The younger Greenwood was eventually invited to join On A Friday, but it was clear who was in charge. Yorke was both driving force and chief songwriter. Stylistically, though, he was all over the place: the primitive home demo tape he handed to his bandmates in 1986 featured tracks ranging from the Prince-with-bad-scratching stylings of *Rattlesnakes* to the feedback-heavy *What Is That You Say*. Despite its lack of refinement, the rest of On A Friday were impressed.

“After hearing it, I knew that Thom was writing great songs,” said Jonny Greenwood. “I couldn’t get over the fact that if I played an Elvis Costello record and then his stuff, the songs were as good.”

Not everyone agreed. A local promoter named Mac booked On A Friday to play their first gig at Oxford’s Jericho Tavern in 1987. It saw Jonny Greenwood perched nervously on the side of the stage with his harmonica (“Waiting for his big moment,” as Phil Selway later put it).

“It was terrible,” Mac later recalled. “[*They were like*] A bad version of [*early-’80s funk-pop band*] Haircut 100.”

By autumn 1987, O’Brien, Colin Greenwood and Selway were all at university. Jonny Greenwood still had three years to complete at Abingdon, while Thom Yorke wouldn’t go to university for another year. For the next four years, On A Friday would be operational only during holiday time, although they would find the time to briefly experiment

with a pair of female saxophonists.

Yorke had initially resisted the lure of further education, holding down a job selling suits in the menswear section of an Oxford department store over the summer, despite informing his employers in typically forthright fashion that their stock was “crap”. When he was accused of stealing, he handed in his notice. A few weeks later, Yorke was accepted on an



Abingdon School: Radiohead’s alma mater.



Top: On A Friday at London School of Economics in 1988. Left: Yorke’s other band, Headless Chickens.

English and Art course at Exeter University, which he started in October 1988.

Despite the degree, Yorke was mostly interested in making a go of music. He formed a second band, the violin-augmented Headless Chickens, with fellow student Simon Shackleton. One early Headless Chickens track was *High And Dry*, later to be reworked on Radiohead's *The Bends*. Another, *Creep*, would be saved for *On A Friday*.

"Most of the time I was busy bragging about my future as a pop star," he admitted. "My sketchbooks were full of lyrics and designs for record sleeves."

It was there, too, that Yorke first developed an interest in electronic music, playing tracks from the likes of The Shamen and jungle pioneers The Ragga Twins during his regular Friday night DJ set at the student union. This period also saw him toy with a skewed visual identity, parading around in charity-shop hats and coats normally worn by pensioners, to the annoyance of the locals.

"I was into dressing like an old man," he explained. "But I went out one night and there were these three blokes waiting to beat someone up. They said something and I turned around and blew them a kiss and that was it. They beat the living shit out of me. That put me off fighting. I thought, I'm kind of asking for it here."

By the summer of 1991, Thom Yorke was more serious than ever about his future as a rock star. Having finished his degree and disbanded Headless Chickens, he returned to Oxford and On A Friday. Fortunately, the others were on the same wavelength. As if to underline this, the band – with the exception of Jonny Greenwood – moved into a semi-detached house near the town centre together.

It was a typical student-style set-up. The financially strapped Yorke slept on the living-room floor. Selway complained that the others stole his honey. Rotten pork pies were extricated from the back of the sofa. But it was here that the group explored their common musical ground: Pixies, Magazine and especially R.E.M. (who for a time they argued they sounded too much like).

Getting Yorke's vision onto tape proved tricky. Various scrappy attempts at recording demos in people's homes and village halls came to nothing. Eventually, the band entered a local studio called Dungeon and recorded three of Yorke's songs – *Give It Up*, *What Is That You Say and Stop Whispering*. The latter in particular attracted the attention of another local studio owner, Chris Hufford, who had produced a demo for Reading "shoegaze" outfit Slowdive and had



On A Friday, Jericho Tavern, 1991 (from left, Yorke, O'Brien, Jonny Greenwood): 'Thom was incredible, even then.'



been given the On A Friday tape by a mutual friend. Hufford and partner Bryce Edge went to the Jericho Tavern to see the band play live.

"I was utterly blown away," he said. "Thom was incredible. I made a complete buffoon of myself, bursting backstage saying, I've got to work with you! I could see it on a world level, even then."

His enthusiasm convinced Yorke. In October 1991, the band entered Hufford and Edge's studio, Courtyard, to record a new, five-song demo featuring future Pablo Honey tracks *You, I Can't and Thinking About You*, plus the ill-advisedly funky *Nothing Touches Me* (about a jailed paedophile), and awfully named *Echo & The Bunnymen steal Philippa Chicken*. It became known as the *Manic Hedgehog EP*, after the local record shop that stocked it.

Flaws aside, the tape was to prove crucial to the band's career. Working in the local branch of record store Our Price, Colin Greenwood handed a copy to a passing EMI sales rep-turned-A&R man named Keith Wozencroft. Impressed with what he heard, Wozencroft drove back up to Oxford the following week to attend an On A Friday gig in a marquee pitched in a local park.

"There was no one there in this little tent apart from a couple of their girlfriends," Wozencroft told Q in 1997. "But

they played really well. I left a message with the sound guy that it was great and kept in touch over the next few months."

When On A Friday played their next gig at the Jericho Tavern in November 1991, the venue was packed with

A&R men up from London. Wozencroft's interest in the tape had sparked attention from other labels, despite the fact the band had played a mere eight gigs in their five years together. But in a show of loyalty to the man who had got there first, on 21 December 1991 On A Friday signed with EMI for an unspecified sum.

There was, however, one condition: On A Friday had to ditch their

name (not a problem given that even the band considered it to be "shit"). Proposed alternatives such as *Jude and Music* weren't much better. They eventually settled on Radiohead, borrowed from a forgettable, reggae-flecked song on Talking Heads' 1986 album *True Stories*.

"Radiohead sums up all these things about receiving stuff," Yorke later enthused. "It's about the way you take information in, the way you respond to the environment you're put in."

If the issue of the name had been resolved, their image needed work. Onstage, Yorke sometimes sported a brown polo-neck jumper, while to his left Jonny Greenwood would wear a tight T-shirt confusingly bearing the name of British funk outfit the Brand New Heavies. It was the beginning of a lengthy struggle to cement their identity that would last another three years, until the release of *The Bends* in 1995, when an interest in attention-grabbing videos and Stanley Donwood's artwork began to take the strain.

What they lacked in image, they made up for in the sort of determination and ambition that had defined Yorke's life and would characterise their future. In December 1991, the singer gave his very first interview, to local Oxford magazine *Curfew*. In it, he made his intentions perfectly clear.

"People sometimes say we take things too seriously," he declared. "But it's the only way you'll get anywhere. We're not going to sit around and wait and just be happy if something turns up. We are ambitious. You have to be."

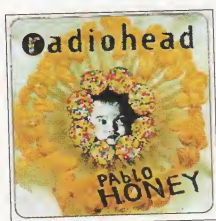
A few moments later, Yorke made his point explicit.

"I want nothing more in the whole world than to be a star," he said. "Nothing more." □



Oxford's Curfew magazine, featuring Thom Yorke's very first interview.

ON A FRIDAY



PABLO HONEY

[PARLOPHONE, 1993]

OK Computer was a long way off.

Few great bands arrive fully formed, and Radiohead were no exception. 1992's Drill EP had been a faltering first step, and their debut album found them still searching for an identity. Recording at Chipping Norton Studio and Oxford's Courtyard with US producers Sean Slade and Paul Q Kolderie (Dinosaur Jr/Lemonheads), it was the sound of a quintessentially English band trying to squeeze themselves into an ill-fitting US alt-rock shaped hole. Ironically, America embraced them thanks to the album's one moment of brilliance, a lacerating anthem whose theme of self-loathing chimed with grunge's angst. Its title: Creep.

YOU

Originally released on 1992's Drill EP [Fig. 1], but here re-recorded with Sean Slade and Paul Q Kolderie, You is that rarest of things: a Radiohead love song, albeit a twisted one. Jonny Greenwood's flowery arpeggios give way to layered rock guitars on this tale of obsessive, all-consuming passion. The line, "It's like the world is going to end so soon" previews the bleaker themes that would emerge in Yorke's later lyrical career. Played live as recently as 2002.

HOW DO YOU?

Unconvincing attempt at punk rock that sees Yorke giving it his best Stars In Their Eyes Johnny Rotten. Concerns the antics of an unnamed mummy's boy-turned-"power freak" determined to steamroller his way to success ("He steals and he bullies/Any way that he can"). Descends into a cacophony of thumping piano and feedback before collapsing after just two minutes. Rightly singled out for ridicule by reviewers on the album's release.

STOP WHISPERING

Early On A Friday track, and the song that convinced Bryce Edge and Chris Hufford that Yorke and co were worth managing. The band were aiming for the Pixies, though its widescreen approach puts it closer to U2. Nailing their stadium-sized aspirations proved difficult, however. "We tinkered with it a bit," recalls Paul Kolderie. "It was kind of a

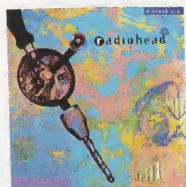


Fig. 1: The sleeve of debut EP Drill: a 'faltering first step'.

sprawling thing and we weren't sure how long it would be." Eventually clocking in at five minutes, it finds Thom Yorke venting his ambivalent feelings towards authority figures ("And they're cursing me, and they won't let me be"). Live, its "doesn't matter anyway" section concluded with a breakdown in which the singer would nightly snarl, "Fuck you!"

THINKING ABOUT YOU

Acoustic ballad with acerbic aftertaste, originally included on the Drill EP. Yorke puts himself in the position of the lonely ex of a star whose "records are a hit". Further underlines his distrust of the music business with the line "who bribed the company to come and see you, honey?" and offers the unsavoury image of him masturbating over thoughts of his one-time paramour. Features Jonny Greenwood on harmonium in an early indication of his future, instrument-juggling ways.

ANYONE CAN PLAY GUITAR

The most cynical of Radiohead's early songs, heaping scorn on the youthful desire for validation via rock stardom. Over abrasive, Sonic Youth-indebted guitars, Yorke casts himself as a desperate wannabe "standing on a beach with my guitar", as if appearing in the most clichéd of '80s music videos. Everyone

in the studio, from band to catering staff, was roped in to play guitar, with the track then being cut up and added to the arrangement.

RIPCORD

Spindly, punk-influenced thrasher that found Yorke airing his fears at signing his life away to EMI, metaphorically preparing himself to be dropped from a great height without a parachute. Introducing the song onstage in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1993, he elucidated on its meaning, saying it tackled the dilemma of "signing, having lots of money and absolutely no idea what the fuck to do with your life."

VEGETABLE

Creep's angry, evil twin: a petulant rocker that finds Yorke in "outsider" mode, externalising his ire with a relish that verges on the childish. It reaches a peak with the tantrum-like couplet: "I spit on the hand that feeds me/I will not control myself". Defiant as opposed to defeated, it remained in their live set until 1995.

PROVE YOURSELF

The lead track on the Drill EP, Prove Yourself hitched its wagon firmly to grunge, with the Neil Young-influenced country rock verses giving way to distorted choruses, while its "I'm better off dead" hookline introduced Thom Yorke's alienated worldview well before Creep. Bizarrely, it found an unlikely champion in perma-tanned Radio 1 DJ Gary Davies [Fig. 2], who made it his track of the week on its original release. "I didn't know anything about the band - it just sounded great," he said. "Years later I bumped into one of the band,



Fig. 2: Radio 1 DJ Gary Davies, unlikely early Radiohead champion.

can't remember which one, and he said, You were the first person to play the record - not John Peel or the Evening Session. It's very nice that he remembered."

I CAN'T

Fuzzy, Dinosaur Jr-indebted track first recorded for 1991's Manic Hedgehog demo by manager Hufford and Edge. Ironically, given that they had produced Dinosaur Jr themselves, Kolderie and Slade struggled to better the original version. "We could never get it at the right speed," says Kolderie. "I wanted it to be faster and everyone else wanted it to be slower, and we went back and forth. I had high hopes for that one and I don't feel like it panned out that well." The track that eventually featured on the album was the original demo version, though it remained little more than filler - borne out by the fact that it had been dropped from the live set by the time Pablo Honey was released.

CREEP

Written by Yorke during his time at Exeter University while suffering from unrequited love and nicknamed "Crap" by the band due to its slacker-anthem ubiquity, Creep was a happy accident. Producers Slade and Kolderie were struggling with Inside My Head and Lurgee until they remembered a track that the band had played in rehearsal - introduced by Yorke as "our Scott Walker song" (which led the Americans to erroneously believe it was a cover). And so, the masterful Creep, a vivid portrait of the outsider, was recorded in one take. The crumbing guitar that ushers in the chorus was the result of Jonny Greenwood trying to sabotage a tune he considered too wimpy.

BEST BIT: The nape-tingling final cry of "run" in the falsetto middle eight.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: Yorke claims he received fan mail from "murderers" saying how much they could relate to Creep.

Radiohead in
Thom Yorke's
Oxford flat, 1993.



'PABLO HONEY FOUND THE BAND SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY.'

TOM SHEEHAN

LURGEE

Alongside Creep, the track that suggested that Radiohead were more than just another indie rock band: a gorgeous, mid-paced track with clean, chiming guitars and a melody that snakes its way up the scales before reaching the falsetto note that ushers in the chorus. As its title suggests, Lurgee finds its narrator recovering from illness-through-failed romance, though still unsure whether the worst is over ("I got something I don't know"). Last played onstage in 1998.

BLOW OUT

The finale of both Pablo Honey and the band's live set at the time, Blow Out pointed to the future. An early prototype of Weird Fishes/Arpeggi with its meshing of simple guitar figures. Here, however, the '60s-echoing, almost bossa nova-grooved Blow Out builds noisily to a full-tilt psych-rock conclusion. Considered by the band to be the high point of Pablo Honey. ■ TOM DOYLE

PABLO HONEY Producers: Sean Slade and Paul Q Kolderie, Chris Hufford | Recorded: September–November 1992, Chipping Norton Studio; Courtyard Studio, Oxford | Released: 22 February 1993

B-SIDES_&_OTHER RECORDINGS

STUPID CAR

First in a string of songs with motorphobic themes (Killer Cars, Airbag), written after Yorke and his then-girlfriend were involved in a road accident. Can also be read as an admission of sexual inadequacy ("You put my brain in overload/I can't change gears").

AVAILABLE ON: DRILL EP (1992)

INSIDE MY HEAD

Pixies-esque track earmarked as a possible single until they struggled to commit a satisfactory version to tape during sessions. Another song dealing with Yorke's conflicting emotions after signing to EMI, with the singer portraying himself as abused victim. "What do you want from me now you got me? Now my energy you suck from me."

AVAILABLE ON: CREEP EP (1992)

MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

Yorke lives out his escapist fantasies, dreaming of writing a "bad cheque" and disappearing on a flight somewhere. An unremarkable thrasher that only gets interesting with its mid-song tempo change into Lennon-like balladry.

AVAILABLE ON: CREEP EP (1992)

FAITHLESS, THE WONDER BOY

Glam-tinged quiet/loud ballad that featured in the band's live sets throughout 1993. Lyrically oblique verses touch on feelings of lost childhood and jealousy, though Yorke insisted its direct chorus ("I can't put the needle in") was about "revenge" rather than drugs. Bafflingly excluded from Pablo Honey, it remains a lost gem.

AVAILABLE ON: ANYONE CAN PLAY GUITAR (1993)

COKE BABIES

Its title was a dig at the '90s shoe-gazing movement centred around fellow Oxford band Ride, but Coke Babies' ambient guitar atmospherics placed it closer to Brian Eno's work with U2 on Achtung Baby. Lyrically, a throwaway exercise in wordplay, as Yorke riffs on the word "easy" ("Easy living... Easy listening").

AVAILABLE ON: ANYONE CAN PLAY GUITAR (1993)

YES I AM

Prompted by Elvis Costello's admission that his early songs were motivated by "revenge and guilt", Yes I Am finds Yorke spurning the

attentions of an acquaintance who had previously done the same to him ("The last time you locked all the doors"). Its over-arching theme of obsession and rejection makes it a close cousin of Creep.

AVAILABLE ON: CREEP (REISSUE) (1993)

POP IS DEAD

Between Pablo Honey and the breakthrough reissued Creep EP came this stand-alone single, arguably the nadir of Radiohead's career. A clumsy attempt to satirise the media's attempts to repackaging everything from art to video games as the new rock'n'roll, its Jam-influenced sound was neither convincing nor much cop. Accurately described by Ed O'Brien as "bollocks".

AVAILABLE ON: POP IS DEAD (1993).

BANANA CO (ACOUSTIC)

Satirical acoustic love-letter to a multi-national corporation that presaged Thom Yorke's later involvement in the anti-globalisation movement. A full electric version would appear on the B-side of 1996's Street Spirit (Fade Out) single.

AVAILABLE ON: POP IS DEAD (1993).



THE BENDS

[PARLOPHONE, 1995]

They'd found their voice.

The Bends marked several "firsts" for Radiohead, all of which would, over the years, become integral to the band. It was the first time they worked with production guru Nigel Godrich, then an engineer, as well as sleeve designer Stanley Donwood. It was also the first time Thom Yorke's anger and self-loathing became a little cryptic. All elements that helped erase the false start that was Pablo Honey, and provide the missing pieces in a louder, angrier, altogether more confident unit. Produced by John Leckie (The Stone Roses, The Verve, Muse), The Bends was recorded throughout 1994 and released in March 1995 – created, then, while Britpop was in full swing. Crucially, although an instant hit in the UK, it stood apart from the prevailing trend, a beacon of modernity in a largely nostalgic age. The Bends was, like its creators, out there on its own.

PLANET TELEX

The only track devised in the studio and completed in a single drunken, late-night jam following a boozy dinner in a Greek restaurant, during which the normally sober Radiohead decided to record using drum loops. Rhythms taken from the end of B-side Killer Cars were rejigged to form the basis of a tune whose lyric was improvised in one take by a horizontal Yorke. The original title, Planet Xerox, was changed to sidestep any problems with the office equipment giant.

THE BENDS

The band worked through several takes, initially worried that the title track sounded too bombastic, an impression mitigated by the tinkling sound effects in the opening. Jonny Greenwood tried many different guitar-and-amp combinations before returning to his original Fender set up in Oxfordshire's Manor studios in August 1994, where the track was finally completed. Its "don't have any real friends" line put it in the frame as a possible follow-up single to Creep; instead The Bends got the nod as the album's title track.

HIGH & DRY

Done in one take in 1993, at a studio owned by their management, with

Jim Warren producing, this delicate acoustic track was never intended for the album. Later, Yorke even dismissed it as "not bad... it's very bad." It was its presumed commercial appeal that led to its inclusion – in the form of the original demo recording – at the mixing stage in August. An unplugged antidote to the preceding storm of the title track, it featured one of Yorke's most touchingly choirboyish vocals, wrapped around a lyric that mocked macho vanity.

FAKE PLASTIC TREES

Recorded at Rak studios in April, on the evening the band returned to the studio mesmerised by a Jeff Buckley gig [Fig. 1]. A heart-melting melody disguised a caustic attack on various forms of consumerism, with Yorke inspired by London's Canary Wharf. Although its most memorable target was plastic surgery, "on girls in the '80s, but gravity always wins". As airy and acoustic as High & Dry, the arrangement was more complex, using submerged strings and an old Hammond organ, played by Jonny Greenwood, whose tone controls required resetting after every bar.

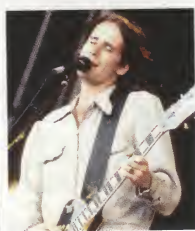


Fig. 1: Jeff Buckley, the inspiration for Fake Plastic Trees.

BONES

A strong early contender for lead single, Bones was another quiet/

JUST

The pronounced quiet/loud dynamics of Just defined the dominant style of the album, a more evolved version of the emotionally fraught sound of the grunge movement. The opening chords have something of the feel of the intro to Smells Like Teen Spirit by Nirvana, whose leader Kurt Cobain committed suicide on 5 April, partway through the initial recording sessions. Although the theme of self-loathing and breakdown in Yorke's lyric – "You do it to yourself, you do" – could be read as a comment on Cobain's demise, Just, like every Bends track bar Planet Telex, was written months before recording began. It was producer John Leckie's favourite track.

BEST BIT: Jonny Greenwood's manic, shrieking guitar is followed by a sudden cliff-hanging pause, then Yorke's accusatory howl, "You do it to yourself..."

STRANGE BUT TRUE: Despite its astonishing range of guitar sounds, Just was recorded live in the studio with no overdubs.

loud moment, underpinned by an unusual – for Radiohead – blues-boogie beat. After much trial and error, the tempo, and the tuning of Phil Selway's drums, were eventually settled during the second stint of recordings at the Manor in July. Indecipherably cryptic though the lyrics mostly were, lines such as "now I can't climb the stairs" enhanced Yorke's fragile persona.

(NICE DREAM)

It sounded like the entire band were strumming acoustic guitars on this lilting





BRIAN GARITY

'A BEACON OF MODERNITY IN A NOSTALGIC AGE.'

beauty. And they were, all five of them, on the terrace outside the Manor studio one sunny day in July. John Leckie's intention was to recreate the lush ambience of George Harrison's *My Sweet Lord*, suiting lyrics about a "good angel," a "garden" and a sense of mysterious belonging. The cello and violin nearly didn't make it after Yorke learned that Leckie had recently used strings on an album by Ride, the band's Oxford rivals of the time.

MY IRON LUNG

The album's lead single was also the product

of its most unusual recording. The track was spliced together using live takes of the verses from an MTV performance at the Astoria in London in the early summer, alongside choruses edited from the earlier, Rak studio version. According to Yorke, the iron lung of the title was a reference to how the success of *Creep* had both helped and hindered Radiohead's development. The way the song swerved confidently between snarling, squealing guitars and cool lyrical reverie indicated they were now on a different page entirely.

BULLETPROOF... I WISH I WAS

The title was a self-explanatory plea by Yorke: if only he weren't so damn sensitive. Like *High & Dry* and *Fake Plastic Trees*, *Bulletproof* did not try to conceal its origins as a solo acoustic strum with a dreamy falsetto floated on top, but it took time to polish. The whooshing sound effects and ghostly whale-song howls – randomly improvised on guitar by Greenwood and O'Brien – were only added at the Manor five months after recording had started.

BLACK STAR

A love song with an unusual fade-in opening and an oddly hiccupping bassline, this was the first track the band's soon-to-be regular producer Nigel Godrich worked on unsupervised. Black Star was initially regarded as B-side material, to be knocked off while Leckie was away working on preliminary single mixes. Rak's assistant engineer Godrich bonded with the band, the result being that this upbeat tune with a giddy chorus was promoted onto the album after a playback in September.

SULK

Inspired by the Hungerford massacre of 1987, when lone gunman Michael Ryan killed 16 people in a small Berkshire town, Sulk was the last album track to be finished. Its late arrival was partly down to its complex layering of electronics and guitars, but mainly because of Yorke's worry that the song's original lyric, which contained the line "just shoot your gun", might be taken as a crude cash-in on the suicide of Kurt Cobain. Even with the revised lyric and thunderous rolling rhythm, it has seldom made it into the band's live set.

STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT)

Yorke insisted he didn't really write this, that he was merely a conduit for something he called "our purest, saddest song," and one that he still finds emotionally exhausting to perform. The arpeggio guitar part was Ed O'Brien's big moment, using an instrument constructed by the band's guitar tech "Plank". The album's fifth single, it went Top 5 in February 1996, thanks in part to its Jonathan Glazer-directed promo [Fig. 2]. ■ ROBERT SANDALL



Fig. 2: Video for Street Spirit (Fade Out), their 'purest, saddest song'

THE BENDS Producers: John Leckie, Radiohead, Jim Warren, Nigel Godrich | Recorded: March – September 1994, Rak and Abbey Road studios, London; Manor studios, Oxfordshire | Released: 13 March 1995

Recording, alfresco-style, Manor studios, 1994.



JOHN LECKIE, NOBAL

B-SIDES & OTHER RECORDINGS

THE TRICKSTER

A relative lightweight by the standards of The Bends, both lyrically and musically, The Trickster's straightforward, garage guitar arrangement pointed back to the sound of Pablo Honey. This was one of the first recordings in the Rak sessions of March and April, and was never considered to serve as anything other than a B-side for the follow-up single to Creep.

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CDI (1994)

PUNCHDRUNK LOVESICK LOVESONG

This dreamy freak-out had its origins in a row between Yorke and his girlfriend. The title referred to the couple's curious way of resolving their disagreements. "Whenever my partner and I have fights, we pull out our Punch & Judy puppets," Yorke revealed. After one particularly energetic spat, Judy needed to be taken back to the toy shop for repairs, at which point Yorke wrote a song oozing contrition: "A beautiful girl can turn your world to dust."

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CDI (1994)

LOZENGE OF LOVE

A twisted love song – summed up by Yorke gently crooning, "I won't be around when you really need me" – the title was lifted from Sad Steps, an early poem by the laureate of failed love affairs, Philip Larkin. Still considered an underrated classic, the song benefited from Jonny Greenwood's growing confidence as a lead guitarist of considerable intricacy and melodic flair.

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CDI (1994)

LEWIS (MISTREATED)

A jaunty, upbeat guitar riff disguised the grim subject matter of a song in which Yorke addressed the "low corporate" employee Lewis of the bracketed title whose soulless, dead-end job has led him to consider suicide: "The smell of fear is thicker than you think, don't do it, don't jump." Despite being one of Radiohead's most exuberant

B-sides from The Bends sessions, this has seldom showed up in their live set.

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CD2 (1994)

PERMANENT DAYLIGHT

Legend has it that this short, guitar-heavy piece was recorded as a tribute to Sonic Youth, a band Radiohead certainly admired at the time. The track started out as an instrumental during their live shows of 1993, was upgraded into a song for The Bends sessions and, despite its B-side status, was still part of the band's set during the Amnesiac tour of 2001.

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CD2 (1994)

YOU NEVER WASH UP AFTER YOURSELF

An unusually whimsical item with a lyric boasting lines such as, "yesterday's meal is hugging the plates", which were guaranteed to appeal to slacker students everywhere. This one-take track never aspired to be more than a B-side and disappeared without trace following its release on the back of My Iron Lung. Like Black Star, the band recorded it with assistant engineer Nigel Godrich at Rak while John Leckie was away mixing.

AVAILABLE ON: MY IRON LUNG CD2 (1994)

INDIA RUBBER

The booming drums suggest Radiohead were getting into mid-'90s dance trend trip-hop, specifically DJ Shadow, although the lyrics were Yorke at his most nonsensically self-hating ("Now the dogs have had their meat, I think I'll go plug in the mains"). Jonny Greenwood's laughter at the end lightened the mood.

AVAILABLE ON: FAKE PLASTIC TREES CDI (1995)

HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?

An unhappy love song, with Yorke on the outside, looking askance at

a relationship that seems doomed to failure. Radiohead first recorded this for a 1993 radio session and resurrected it for The Bends at the suggestion of Colin Greenwood. It didn't make the cut but did surface later on the soundtrack to the Japanese movie Nowhere.

AVAILABLE ON: FAKE PLASTIC TREES CDI (1995)

MAQUILADORA

A catchy, straight ahead guitar rocker rooted in the pop-grunge style of Pablo Honey, this track never aimed for the tortured grandiosity of The Bends – save, perhaps, for its indecipherably cryptic title and crash-and-burn lyrics. It worked best live, as shown on the MTV-filmed London Astoria performance (available on DVD), which the band recorded while in the middle of making the album.

AVAILABLE ON: HIGH & DRY CDI (1995)

KILLER CARS

This live favourite, with its motorist-hating agenda, was initially considered to be a contender as a single, but lost ground as the more ambitious character of The Bends emerged. The voices heard in the middle section were recorded in a phone conversation with a luxury car showroom in London's Mayfair during which a friend of Nigel Godrich posed as a potential buyer.

AVAILABLE ON: HIGH & DRY CD2 (1995)

TALK SHOW HOST

Another foray into trip-hop, this track outgrew its B-side status and became a firm live favourite. It later appeared on the soundtrack to Baz Luhrmann's film retooling of Romeo

+ Juliet [Fig. 3] in 1996.

AVAILABLE ON: STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT) CDI (1996)

BISHOP'S ROBES

Sedate and mournful, but to the point. The "bastard headmaster" in the verse, the references to kids "tearing themselves to bits on playing fields"

and the keening chorus, "I'm not going back", all left no doubt as to how Yorke felt about his spell at Abingdon public school.

AVAILABLE ON: STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT) CDI (1996)

MOLASSES

A slow, hypnotic groove overlaid with a Middle Eastern flavoured synthesizer riff and a catchy harmonised vocal. The lyric's elliptical references to "genocide," "rent-free earthquake zones" and "starving waitresses in plasters" suggested that Yorke was riffing on newspaper headlines.

AVAILABLE ON: STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT) CD2 (1996)

BANANA CO

An acoustic version of this song first appeared on a 1993 radio session, which later made it onto Radiohead's Itch EP. Its popularity live – and particularly the "Oh, Banana Co" hook – persuaded the band to re-record it at Rak in March 1994. Its effervescent, almost pop-rock style made it a suitable contrast for the moody intensity of the A-side.

AVAILABLE ON: STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT) CD2 (1996)

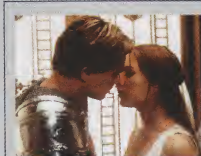


Fig. 3: Romeo + Juliet. Talk Show Host appears on its soundtrack.

RADIOH

The weird world of Thom Yorke and chums is available for all to view on YouTube.



1 LIFE'S A BEACH

In the summer of 1993, Radiohead became the first act to appear on frothy US MTV show *Beach House*. Filmed at an opulent mansion in The Hamptons, an uncomfortable-looking band barrel through a swimming pool while teens gyrate around a swimming pool behind them. Everything they've done since has been a reaction to this.

WATCH OUT FOR: Yorke jumping into the pool at the song's climax.

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, *Beach House*



2 NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

Yorke described Carly Simon's theme to 1977 James Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me* as the "sexiest song that was ever written". Cue this respectful cover, recorded in 1995 for MTV's *Most Wanted*. Drummer Phil Selway was less enthused. "It lacks a certain something in hindsight," he grumbled afterwards.

WATCH OUT FOR:

The giant "No Nukes" sticker on Jonny Greenwood's guitar.

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, *Nobody Better*

3 NO SURPRISES LIVE AT GLASTONBURY

Highlight of their career-making headline set at 1997's rain-sodden Glastonbury. Michael Eavis cited their show as "the most inspiring festival gig in 30 years." Ed O'Brien was less impressed, describing it as "the worst night of our lives," due to technical difficulties throughout.

WATCH OUT FOR: The fireworks exploding, sealing Radiohead's status as Glasto's unofficial house band.

KEYWORDS: No Surprises, Glastonbury

4 FROM THE BASEMENT

A solo Thom Yorke premieres *In Rainbows* tracks *Videotape* and *Down Is The New Up* on Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich's 2006 TV show-cum-webcast. The intimate surroundings of the BBC's Maida Vale studios are reflected in the stripped-down performances: just Yorke and his piano.

WATCH OUT FOR: In a later episode, Yorke plays the recently written *Last Flowers* with a lyric sheet propped on the piano.

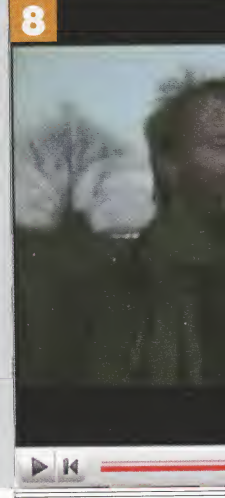
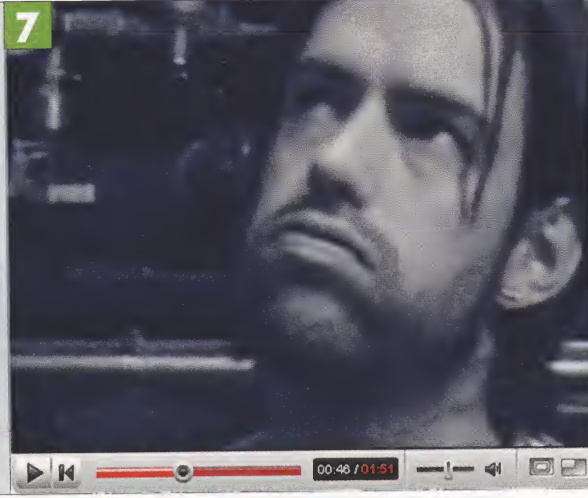
KEYWORDS: Radiohead, *Basement*

5 "NEXT QUESTION"

Thom Yorke in "grouch" mode during this *Kid A*-era interview for Dutch TV show *Musica*. The mood turns frosty when the interviewer prods him on whether he's going solo. "I don't want to be answering questions on that for the next fucking five years," says Yorke, with a deathly glare.

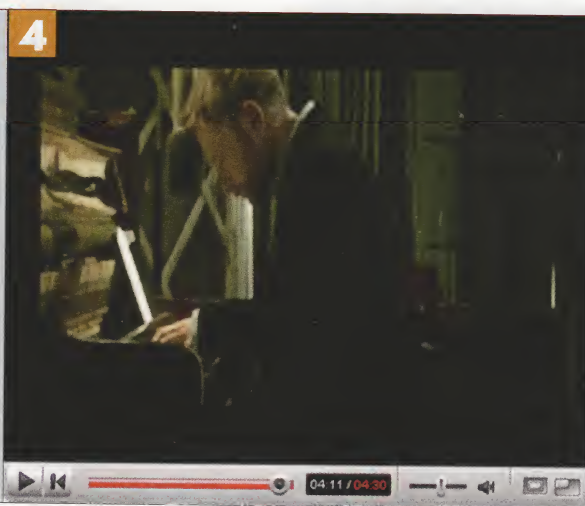
WATCH OUT FOR: The interviewer twiggling that things aren't going as planned: "[long pause] Do you have a problem with those questions?"

KEYWORDS: Thom Yorke, awkward interview



EAD TV

From disembodied heads to James Bond karaoke, here are 10 of the best clips.



6 LIKE SPINNING PLATES

Commissioned to make a video for Amnesiac track Like Spinning Plates, artist Johnny Hardstaff delivers a slice of 21st-century psychedelia that captures the song's disconnected technophobia. The close-ups of otherworldly machines and rotating mechanical Siamese twins are as disturbing as they are striking.

WATCH OUT FOR: Those sinister babies. Director David Cronenberg would be proud.

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, Spinning Plates

7 ED O'BRIEN'S SHOWBIZ LIFE

Filed for 2002's Radiohead TV webcast, this barmy clip finds the guitarist responding to a series of knowingly inane questions ("Have you ever snogged a fan?") with seal-like yelps. Another clip features Thom Yorke answering similar questions in a distorted voice.

WATCH OUT FOR: O'Brien's look of mild embarrassment after he sings There's No Business Like Show Business in a daft voice.

KEYWORDS: Ed O'Brien, Showbiz Life

8 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Back-to-nature acoustic version of In Rainbows track Faust Arp, featuring Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood playing on Wittenham Clumps, a hill overlooking Didcot power station, at sunset. Directed by comedian Adam Buxton, it was filmed just 24 hours before it was broadcast as part of the 2007's Thumbs Down webcast.

WATCH OUT FOR: Yorke's voice battling with the noise of the wind crunching on the mics.

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, Faust Arp

9 WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Spoof of David Fincher's 1995 thriller Se7en, from the Thumbs Down webcast. Footage from the original movie is spliced with specially filmed material. Cue Morgan Freeman opening the cardboard box, only to find the disembodied head of Thom Yorke singing I5 Step.

WATCH OUT FOR: Yorke's appeal to Fincher: "Please don't issue us with a writ... we meant it in the best possible taste."

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, Seven

10 LIVE AT 93 FEET EAST

In keeping with the spirit of In Rainbows, the band played a "surprise" show at 240-capacity London club 93 Feet East in January 2008. Authentically lo-fi footage captures the intimacy of their smallest gig in years, while the set includes the whole of the album, plus a six-song encore of old favourites.

WATCH OUT FOR: Final track The Bends, which sees Yorke mumbling through the verses like a petulant teenager.

KEYWORDS: Radiohead, 93 Feet East





OK COMPUTER

[PARLOPHONE, 1997]

They saw the future and didn't care for it.

The success of *The Bends* gave Radiohead the confidence to stretch and experiment. Early sessions at the band's Canned Applause studio yielded instant results. Yet it was only after co-producer Nigel Godrich suggested they decamp to St Catherine's Court, a mansion near Bath owned by actress Jane Seymour, that the scope of their ambition became clear. Godrich encouraged them to try new technology and unusual environments – *Exit Music (For A Film)* was partly recorded in the stone entrance hall – while the increasingly politicised Yorke found his true voice: that of the little man trying to retain his humanity in the face of relentless technological and material advances. A landmark album in every respect.

AIRBAG

Like *Planet Telex* before it, an oblique opener, built around a looped three-second sample of drummer Phil Selway, who cited DJ Shadow as an inspiration (Shadow would later end up DJing on the *OK Computer* tour). The mesh of rock and electronics was at once reminiscent of Zooropa-era U2 and indicative of new directions. Initially titled *Last Night An Airbag Saved My Life*, in reference to both the 1983 disco track *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life* and a punning headline Yorke had seen in an AA manual, it captured the mood of baleful euphoria and confusion which would run through the entire album.

SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN

Originally titled *Uptight*, a reflective pause amid all the tension. Yet despite the title's nod to Bob Dylan and Jonny Greenwood's spiralling, Pink Floyd-like guitar, Yorke cited Miles Davis's 1970 jazz-fusion classic *Bitches Brew* [Fig. 1] as inspiration – he'd been playing the album "endlessly", its sonic detail and sense of space making a major impression: "You're never quite sure where you are in it, it seems to be swimming around you." His lyrical reverie ("Up above, aliens hover") was sparked by finding himself alone at night on a country road after his car hit a pheasant.



Fig. 1: Jazz kingpin Miles Davis, master of 'sonic detail'.

EXIT MUSIC (FOR A FILM)

A gripping evocation of romantic love which starts out as a simple acoustic ballad before unfolding into a controlled chaos of fuzz-bass and swarming samples. One of two songs written prior to the recording at Canned Applause, it was originally commissioned for the end credits of Baz Luhrmann's flashy cinematic Shakespeare update, *Romeo + Juliet*. The subject matter struck an immediate chord with Yorke who had seen the 1968 Franco Zeffirelli version as an impressionable 13-year-old. "I just couldn't believe why *[they]* didn't run away together. Romeo should have... jumped out of the window and eloped with her!"

LET DOWN

According to Yorke, a song about doing nothing: "Andy Warhol once said that he could enjoy his own boredom. *Let Down* is about that." [Fig. 2] It's also one of the band's most affecting works, recorded at 3am in the ballroom at St Catherine's Court, with Jonny Greenwood's hypnotic guitar providing the counterpoint to a Yorke vocal which resonates with the disturbing "mental chatter" he later identified as the album's primary inspiration.

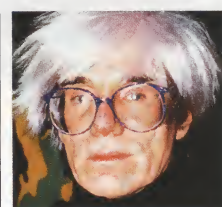


Fig. 2: Andy Warhol, whose periods of inertia gave rise to *Let Down*.

KARMA POLICE

A later live favourite that grew out of a band in-joke. "When someone in the band behaved like an asshole, one of the others always said, 'The Karma Police is gonna get you,'" recalled Ed O'Brien, who also supplied the closing wall of feedback. Musically, its urgent backbeat and vaguely sinister air echoes The Beatles' *Sexy Sadie*. Yorke's paranoiac vocal may have sounded elliptical, but was intended as an explicit protest against corporate business. "This is a song against bosses," he claimed. "Fuck the middle management!"

FITTER HAPPIER

A list of phrases culled largely from self-help books Yorke had been reading and written during a three-month period of writer's block, this weirdly processed interlude was voiced not as some believed by physicist Stephen Hawking, but "Fred" – part of the speech function on Macintosh computers. Played just before the band came onstage for much of the *OK Computer* tour, it also featured in printed form on the album's poster campaign, prompting Ed O'Brien to comment: "I think that some people really... think we are some kind of health freaks."

ELECTIONEERING

A sign of Thom Yorke's increasing interest in global politics – and sly comment on the band's gruelling promotional schedule as documented in Grant Gee's tour film *Meeting People Is Easy*. The Beatles-like opening riff and clanking percussion kick-start the album's second half, while the expanded world-view, especially the No Logo-inspired references to the IMF and "voodoo economics", showed the distance Yorke had travelled from the tortured introversion of *The Bends*.

CLIMBING UP THE WALLS

Ed O'Brien felt the "gothical" atmosphere of Radiohead's most sinister track was the result of recording in the library at St Catherine's Court (Yorke later claimed the house was haunted). The stark percussion hints at *Hail To The Thief's* Krautrock influences and Yorke's lyrics evoke the troubled mind of a mass killer ("Open up your skull, I'll be there"), while the unnerving string coda was inspired largely by an interest in modern Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki, whose works also feature on the soundtrack to Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.

NO SURPRISES

Thom Yorke introduced the rest of the band to this song in their dressing room in Oslo,

PARANOID ANDROID

Post *Creep*, Radiohead's defining moment. First performed in Belgium in July 1996, while supporting Alanis Morissette later that summer at Darien Lake Performing Arts Center in upstate New York, it mutated into a 10-minute epic that concluded with Jonny Greenwood improvising on a Hammond organ and Yorke singing "The walls... the walls...". Taking a cue from The Beatles' *Happiness Is A Warm Gun*, once in the studio the band broke the song down into sections, working separately on the percussive opening, jagged central riff and operatic coda. Yorke, meanwhile, wrung every ounce of anguish from a lyric that meshed technological angst and scathing social observation – and provided the highlight of their now-legendary Glastonbury performance that summer.

BEST BIT: The sudden, menacing shift in tone as Yorke delivers the peerless line, "Kicking, squealing Gucci little piggy."

STRANGE BUT TRUE: According to Ed O'Brien, the band originally set out to write a song that connected Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* and the Pixies.

Colin Greenwood, Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood at St Catherine's Court, April 1997.



'I DEAL WITH STUFF BY BURYING IT.' THOM YORKE

KEN SHARP, REX GETTY

following a support gig to R.E.M. in the city on 3 August 1995. Later, with rewritten lyrics and a new glockenspiel melody, it was dubbed the album's "stadium-friendly" song by Colin Greenwood and demonstrated Radiohead's ability to marry melodic beauty to themes of anxiety and confusion, Yorke drawing parallels between landfill and personal crises. "That's how I deal with stuff," he later told an interviewer. "I bury it." The Grant Gee-directed video [Fig 3], which featured an increasingly distressed Thom Yorke singing from within a fish bowl as it filled with water, encapsulated the album's theme of helplessness.



Fig 3: A 'distressed' Thom Yorke in the video for No Surprises.

LUCKY

Written and recorded in a single five-hour stint for the War Child charity in September 1995. According to Thom Yorke the entire song was sparked by a weird, high-pitched chord Ed O'Brien played on his guitar during a soundcheck in Japan that summer. Heard

during the song's opening, the noise adds a light-headed effect, accentuated by the choral samples and swooping guitar solo, both added by Jonny Greenwood. The first time Nigel Godrich had been billed as co-producer. Yorke later described Lucky as "the first mark on the wall" for OK Computer.

THE TOURIST

Written by Jonny Greenwood in response to seeing a group of tourists dash through a town in France, this was intended to be a song about the "speed you live your life with". Greenwood opted to perform the main melody on the Mellotron, a vintage keyboard that plays sounds recorded onto tape loops, Yorke added lyrics he wrote while on holiday in Prague, with the message to "slow down" particularly relevant to a band which had been touring the world for much of the previous 18 months. ■ RUPERT HOWE

OK COMPUTER **Producer:** Nigel Godrich, Radiohead | **Recorded:** July 1996 – March 1997, Canned Applause, Oxfordshire; St Catherine's Court, Bath | **Released:** 16 June 1997

B-SIDES & OTHER RECORDINGS

POLYETHYLENE (PARTS 1 & 2)

This two-part curiosity, in which a brief acoustic opening abruptly gives way to angular stadium rock, might have made the cut on The Bends.

AVAILABLE ON: PARANOID ANDROID SINGLE CDI (1997)

PEARLY*

One of the few Radiohead B-sides to feature in the band's live sets. The cryptic lyrics – a reflection on the power of "whiteness" in global culture – have been the focus of much debate among fans.

AVAILABLE ON: PARANOID ANDROID SINGLE CDI (1997)

A REMINDER

Opening with a recording of announcements made at a Prague metro station, it taps the same mood of tourbus ennui as Let Down. Written by Yorke in a hotel room on a day when "there was just nothing to do at all".

AVAILABLE ON: PARANOID ANDROID SINGLE CD2 (1997)

MELATONIN

Named after the hormone associated with the ageing

process, but with Yorke adopting the voice of a parent who wishes death on anyone who stands in the way of his son. Its shifting rhythm presaged Kid A.

AVAILABLE ON: PARANOID ANDROID CD2 (1997)

MEETING IN THE AISLE

Dated early attempt at instrumental electronica, with its dub bassline all-too-obviously influenced by The Orb and late-'90s recordings on the Warp label.

AVAILABLE ON: KARMA POLICE SINGLE CDI (1997)

LULL

Notable for its looping, Byrds-like guitar, echoed by Jonny Greenwood on the xylophone. Contains the classic Yorke line, "There's nothing more dull than talking about yourself."

AVAILABLE ON: KARMA POLICE SINGLE CDI (1997)

PALO ALTO

Inspired by a March 1996 date the band played in Palo Alto, a hi-tech boomtown at the heart of Silicon Valley, California, this vision of a beautiful yet sterile "city of the future" propelled by

some R.E.M.-like chord changes and vicious Jonny Greenwood guitar work was known as OK Computer before being shelved.

AVAILABLE ON: NO SURPRISES SINGLE CDI (1998)

HOW I MADE MY MILLIONS

Haunting piano refrain recorded by Yorke on a four-track at his home while girlfriend Rachel pottered around in the kitchen. He was persuaded to release it unaltered after playing the tape to the rest of the band.

AVAILABLE ON: NO SURPRISES SINGLE CDI (1998)



KID A

[PARLOPHONE, 2000]

When it all went a bit "Aphex Twin".

Success affects different people in different ways. For Thom Yorke, the sudden ubiquity of OK Computer robbed him, not only of his love for making music, but his ability to create it in the first place. The singer spent 1998 battling depression and writer's block, the band soldiering on and struggling to decide whether they should relocate their mojo via three-minute rock songs or a leap into the unknown. Led by Yorke, the latter won out, the band feeling their way through Nigel Godrich-produced experimental sessions in Paris, Copenhagen, Oxford and Gloucestershire between January 1999 and April 2000. The result was almost like starting over; 10 tracks, no singles, few reference points from their immediate past, electronic textures, Yorke's voice as instrument rather than deliverer of lyrics, plus a sense of adventure that would hint at the future. It was also vindication: released in October 2000, Kid A would reach Number 1 on both sides of the Atlantic.

EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

The first sign that their radical re-think might prove worthwhile, arriving after a year of fraught and largely fruitless rehearsals in Paris and Copenhagen. Written on Thom Yorke's new baby grand piano but recorded using sparse electronic instrumentation, its melodic simplicity and computer-processed vocals set Kid A's aesthetic template. Originally, Yorke thought his repetitive "woke up sucking a lemon" lyrics "really silly" but listening to it afterwards realised that, subconsciously, it pointed towards his own mental state during the sessions.

KID A

Following the OK Computer tour, Yorke consumed the entire back catalogue of pioneering Sheffield electronica label Warp Records, home to Aphex Twin [Fig. 1], Autechre and Boards Of Canada. Their influence is all over Kid A, especially the clattering title track, with its oriental keyboard motifs and robotic vocals. Although his vocal was tweaked beyond recognition, Yorke insisted the lyrics were, "the most vicious I've ever sung". The frontman claimed the title came from his sequencer: for reasons he later forgot, he saved the track's opening melody under the program name "kiddae".

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

The oldest track on Kid A: its riff was written by Yorke when he was 16 years old. Recording began in late 1997 when bass (played by Yorke) and drums were taped for a potential OK Computer B-side, only to be set aside for another two years. It was subsequently revived, under the working title Everyone, in late 1999, during sessions at Batsford Park in Gloucestershire, where discordant brass was added. Inspired by Yorke's jazz hero Charles

Mingus [Fig. 2], who would direct his musicians by asking them to "play like butterflies", Yorke and Jonny Greenwood asked their invited brass section to "play like a traffic jam".

TREEFINGERS

Kid A's most polarising track. Apparently a homage to ambient instrumental godfather Brian Eno, especially his work on Bowie's groundbreaking 1977 album Low, for some, Treefingers was the album's bravest sonic experiment, to others, Radiohead at their self-indulgent worst. What sounds like synthesizers is in fact guitar: Yorke recorded a 10-minute snatch of Ed O'Brien which he then manipulated through his sampler to create its hypnotic loops. In response to its critics, O'Brien argued that Treefingers "might not be a classic verse-chorus-verse-chorus, but it's still a song."

OPTIMISTIC

Optimistic was the album's first

glimpse of "traditional" Radiohead – driven by O'Brien and Greenwood's guitars, with Yorke in classic falsetto mode. Like How To Disappear Completely, the lyrics were autobiographical: its chorus of, "You can try the best you can/The best you can is good enough" were the regular words of encouragement from Yorke's partner during his post-OK Computer depression. Issued in America as a radio-only promo, it became their biggest US hit since Creep, reaching Number 10 on Billboard's Modern Rock Chart. O'Brien put its appeal down to Stateside FM stations' radio compression, which made it sound "like an American rock song".

IN LIMBO

Originally titled Lost At Sea, In Limbo took over nine months to finish, the result striking a balance between "old Radiohead" (notably the melancholic guitar arpeggios of OK Computer) and the creative sound-manipulation using studio gizmos ProTools and Cubase that would define their new direction. Yorke's lyrics continue the album's themes of loss and lack of direction – he finds himself adrift in "Lundy, Fastnet, Irish Sea", areas between Great Britain and Ireland in the BBC Shipping Forecast.

IDIOTEQUE

When Jonny Greenwood compiled a DAT tape sampling passages from a rare 1976 album of early electronic music, Yorke thought sections of it "absolute genius" and began cutting up his favourite passage, a snippet of Mild und Leise by American "computer-music" composer Paul Lansky, to create Idiotique. Its up-tempo dance foundations marked another sizeable shift away from their guitar-based roots, also contrasting sharply with Yorke's apocalyptic lyrics about a coming ice age. The concept, explained Yorke, was to create the feeling of a James



Fig. 1: Aphex Twin, whose influence is 'all over' Kid A.



Fig. 2: jazz hero Charles Mingus, playing 'like a butterfly'.

HOW TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY

Kid A's finest track was also the most succinct articulation of the adverse effects OK Computer's success had on Yorke. Written in 1998 and initially titled How To Disappear Completely And Never Be Found, it was inspired by Yorke's stage fright prior to a show at the Royal Dublin Showgrounds the previous June (hence the reference to Dublin's River Liffey). When Yorke rang Michael Stipe for assistance, the R.E.M. frontman would unwittingly help out with the lyrics. "I said, I cannot cope with this," explained Yorke. "[Stipe] said, Pull the shutters down and keep saying, I'm not here, This is not happening." Yorke cut a rough demo, then passed it to Jonny Greenwood, who devised its haunting string arrangements, played by the Orchestra Of St John's. A popular encore to this day, Yorke has since praised the track as "the most beautiful thing we ever did".

BEST BIT: The Orchestra Of St John's sweeps in at 2.19. Radiohead subsequently donated £20,000 from their July 2001 concert in Oxford's South Park to the OSJ.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: Though he helped inspire the song, Michael Stipe would later cite it as a direct influence on his own Disappear from R.E.M.'s Reveal (2001).

Going underground: Radiohead adorn the walls of London's Bank tube station, 2000.



'MICHAEL STIPE SAID, PULL THE SHUTTERS DOWN AND PRETEND IT'S NOT HAPPENING.' THOM YORKE

Brown or hip hop record full of "the things that freak you out, the most worrying images you could have."

MORNING BELL

Among Kid A's most memorable and disturbing lyrics was Morning Bell's "cut the kids in half" refrain ("Extremely violent," agreed Yorke). Written, like much of the album, by assembling cut-up scraps of lyrics pulled at random from a hat (a method previously used by David Bowie in the mid-'70s), Yorke almost lost the song after the original Mini-disc demo was wiped during an electric storm. Five months later,



Fig. 3: The Smiths, an inspiration on Motion Picture Soundtrack.

Morning Bell mysteriously came flooding back to him as he was falling asleep on a long-distance flight. Two versions were recorded over a 12-month period but released in reverse order. Kid A's is the second, more danceable take.

MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

Just missing inclusion on OK Computer, Motion Picture Soundtrack was first performed by Yorke on acoustic guitar as early as 1996. It eventually underwent a "Walt Disney" makeover, played instead on funereal harmonium with layers of

sampled harp. Yorke's "see you in the next life" echoes Morrissey's final farewells in The Smiths' Asleep and Death Of A Disco Dancer [Fig. 3], while a fourth verse beginning "Beautiful angel/Pulled apart at birth" was dropped from the final take altogether. A potentially orthodox closer, it still lapses into weirdness thanks to the false ending followed by a minute's silence, a strange instrumental reprise then two more minutes' silence. A suitably disconcerting finale. ■ SIMON GODDARD

KID A Producer: Nigel Godrich, Radiohead | Recorded: January 1999 – April 2000, Medley Studios, Copenhagen; Studio Guillaume Tell, Paris; Batsford Park, Glocs; Radiohead HQ, Oxford | Released: 2 October 2000

TALKING 'HEAD

An enigmatic rock band from Oxford, by some of those who know them well.

MICHAEL STIPE

R.E.M. singer. Friend and confidante of Thom Yorke.

"I honestly don't know the first time I heard them, but they feel like they've been in my life forever. I once said Radiohead are so good they scare me. That's very generous. They are a fucking great band, though, I'll give them that. The music that I mostly listen to doesn't have vocals and if it does have vocals, it's sung in another language that I don't understand. So I don't really like singers that much. When I find one that really moves me, that's saying something. I suppose as people we share a curiosity about things. Certainly an attitude about things. Sonically, In Rainbows moved me the first time I heard it. And it gets richer and richer. That's one of the things about Radiohead – it's not as if you hear something and then you're tired of it by the third listen. It keeps growing and growing and growing. They're so unafraid in so many ways and that's to be super-admired."

Stipe and Yorke: "Thanks for taking those curtains off my hands, Michael."



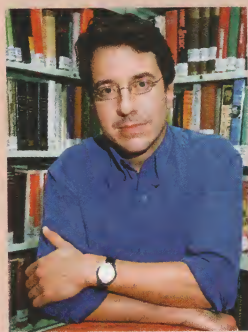
PAUL Q KOLDERIE **Pablo Honey co-producer.**

"Sean [Slade, production partner] and I went to the UK looking for work. Our manager knew Nick Gatfield, who was the head of EMI. He had this band with three guitar players and they were trying to get their guitars loud in the mix. He played us a couple of songs. I thought, Wow, the guy has a great voice."

"They were obviously intelligent, cool guys. Thom was leader by default, just because he had such strong opinions. There were times when he put his foot down. But he wasn't an autocrat, he would listen, there was a democracy. They were obviously friends, too, and they wanted to stay friends."

"We recorded Creep just before lunch one day when we were in the weeds with Inside My Head, which the label thought could be a single. With that in the can, it was tough to finish the rest of the album. Ultimately nobody's really that happy with it. We were struggling to do the best we could at the time. But I knew if they could get off the runway with this record, they had a chance to be a fantastic band."

Radiohead with Sean Slade (left) and Paul Q Kolderie (fourth left).



GEORGE MONBIOT

Author, environmentalist, partner-in-activism.

"There are a lot of musicians who get involved in politics, but most get themselves in some really contradictory positions. Brian Eno and Thom Yorke are the two who know what they're talking about, and it's because they think very hard about the

issues before opening their mouths. Thom and I are both very interested in climate change issues and anti-nuclear issues. In 2003, we went to an anti-war demonstration together at Fairford, the RAF base in Gloucestershire, because we were both passionately interested in trying to stop the Iraq War. I was impressed on that occasion by how hands-on Thom was. When Bob Geldof and Bono campaign, they're always on the stage, one step removed from the public. Thom and I just turned up with the punters and mixed in with the crowds. He's prepared to get his hands dirty and to be involved with people who are trying to achieve the same things, even though everyone wants a piece of him, and it's that humility that marks him out."

Humphrey Lyttelton: "We blew for hours".



HUMPHREY LYTTTELTON

Veteran jazz trumpeter. As heard on Amnesiac's Life In A Glasshouse.

"Jonny Greenwood wrote to me saying, You may think this is awful cheek, but we've got this track that we're having difficulty with. We met up in the BBC canteen, and because I knew they were sensitive about being dubbed gloomy I was hesitant in saying the feel of it would be New Orleans funeral music. I suggested a Louis Armstrong version of St James Infirmary Blues, which is very much in that vein and he said, That might be it. I turned up with my band and we just blew for seven hours with a couple of tea breaks. Every now and then Radiohead disappeared into the control room. We saw them waving their arms about and in the end, my chops were sagging, and I said, Genuinely, I think this is it, we've got it. Thom had spent quite a lot of time standing on his head in the little booth – or at least he went into positions of meditation – and he said to me, I think so... we'll have something to eat and then do some more. I said, No, we will not!"



John Leckie
(centre) with
Radiohead, 1994.

JOHN LECKIE *Producer, The Bends.*

"I love the album but by the end of the sessions I felt devastated. Without telling me, the band sent copies of the mastertapes to the States to be mixed by the Americans who produced Pablo Honey. It was the first time it had happened to me. After 100 days' work I felt like I'd given birth to a dozen babies and had them all taken away. I wasn't even invited to the final playback. The band chose me as producer because I did the first Magazine album, *Real Life*, which they were all big fans of. I suggested we use the Manor studio in Oxfordshire but they said that was 'too rock'n'roll', and went for Mickey Most's RAK studio in London, where we worked solidly for nine weeks. Thom would be there when the studio opened at 9 o'clock, working on his own at the piano before the others turned up at 12. After that the band went off on a tour of the Far East. When they came back they weren't happy with a lot of what we'd done at RAK so they decided they would use the Manor after all. After that I went to Abbey Road to start mixing. I heard later the band said it was like the schoolteacher had left the room. Maybe it was an age thing. I was 20 years older than them. They felt more comfortable with RAK's assistant engineer, this young guy, Nigel Godrich."



CHRIS HOPEWELL *Video director for There There.*

"Thom Yorke had an idea of being a character in one of the little stories you get in *Bagpuss*. A cross

between that and a Grimms fairy tale. Once I heard that, any idea of having people playing instruments or mouthing the lyrics went straight out the window. I sent the band some postcards by a Victorian gentleman called Mr Potter who had his own museum of stuffed animals in weird situations, like kittens at a wedding, and Thom loved it. We shot the opening in a tiny wood near Bristol where I used to go mountain-biking and the rest was done in the studio with logs we brought in. We had Thom there for three days, which he was quite happy about because he had so many press conferences to do. To get the jerky movement he had to do everything at one third the speed, but he did it amazingly. He'd really rehearsed it. I know they think it's one of their better videos, though I have to say most of the success is down to the track being such a beautiful, almost cinematic piece of music. We were approached by ad agencies to do similar stuff afterwards, but it meant too much to me to bastardise it with some product."



GRANT GEE *Film-maker behind Meeting People Is Easy.*

"Meeting People Is Easy was never commissioned as a full-length documentary. I was asked to film Radiohead doing three days of press for OK Computer at a hotel in Barcelona on the strength of a video I made for a band called Spooky [*early-'90s dance act*]. It was 1997, and a turning point for them. I think they were scared and excited about how big they had become and they wanted protection from the cameras; someone to turn the camera on the journalists for once. Five months later I got a call asking if I wanted to go out to New York with them, and that's how the project progressed, in short spurts on the OK Computer tour. The tour is famously the one that nearly broke the band, but I didn't sense that, because I had nothing to compare it to. They weren't happy, but I don't think I would have been happy answering the same questions day after day. I've worked with the band once since *Meeting People Is Easy*, a film of them playing Kid A songs in Air Studios, but they hated it and it was canned. I think they thought it was too conventional. I'd happily work with them again, though - I love the webcast stuff they've been doing recently."

**WE HAVE OVER
250,000
TICKETS
FOR SALE.
THAT'S 10 TIMES
MORE THAN EBAY.
WE ROCK.**

**ALL OUR TICKETS
COME WITH
TICKETCOVER.™
IF THE EVENT IS
CANCELLED,
OR YOU CAN'T
GET THERE,
YOU GET A FULL REFUND.
SOUND AS.**

(TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY)

Now showing

**THE PIGEON
DETECTIVES
BJÖRK
Kaiser Chiefs
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
SCOUTING
FOR GIRLS**

**TO BUY OR SELL TICKETS
VISIT SEATWAVE.COM
OR CALL 020 7127 4150**

seatwave.com 
THE FAN-TO-FAN TICKET EXCHANGE



AMNESIAC

[PARLOPHONE, 2001]

Kid A's more outgoing "twin" brother.

Released eight months after Kid A, Amnesiac offered a different perspective on the same agonising recording sessions. While the former was a coherent statement of their new, electronica-influenced approach, Amnesiac, with its rough edges and flashes of guitar, offered clues to how they arrived there in the first place. It's the stuff that just didn't fit Radiohead's ruthless editing process, or its predecessor's relentlessly sombre mood. Some bands might have lined up the tracks for B-sides or kicked them about for another few years; then again few bands have something as monumental as Pyramid Song or Like Spinning Plates in the filing cabinet.

PACKT LIKE SARDINES IN A CRUSHED TIN BOX

Radiohead considered Kid A and Amnesiac to be "twins separated at birth", a view this opening track only confirmed. Metal cooking pots clank, computers groan and stutter, and the influence of Kid A touchstones Aphex Twin and Autechre is clear. Yorke's weary lyric (memorably: "I'm a reasonable man/Get off my case") apparently came to him while watching "old people, and children" in a Parisian park.

PULK/PULL REVOLVING DOORS

Alice's Adventures In Wonderland [Fig. 1] was one of the odder influences on Amnesiac, specifically the sequence in which Alice arrives in a hall of locked doors. Says Yorke: "I was in that corridor, mentally, for six months... every door I opened, it was like, dreading opening it." The nightmare unfolds with something of the circular horror of Pink Floyd's Brain Damage. Instead of demented laughter and "the lunatic is on the grass" we get vocals mangled by the studio's Autotuner gizmo: "There are sliding doors... and there are secret doors."

YOU AND WHOSE ARMY?

Yorke was an early adopter where disillusionment with New Labour was concerned. Amnesiac's bleakest track was recorded before 9/11 or the Iraq war, and yet it concerned "someone who is

elected into power by people, and then blatantly betrays them, just like Blair did". Although framed as a challenge ("Come on if you think you can take us all on"), the mood is defeated but serene. Its fuzzy, narcoleptic sound was partly achieved by wrapping the microphones in eggboxes.

I MIGHT BE WRONG

One departure from Kid A was that Radiohead were occasionally happy to present themselves as a rock band, although here the dirty riffing recalls Nirvana as played by robots. The lyric apparently documents a "complete crisis point" in Yorke's life, partly caused by the baggage of past relationships and coinciding with an incident when the singer, strolling on a beach, looked back and spotted an apparition in his house.

KNIVES OUT

The kinship between Knives Out and earlier anthems No Surprises and Street Spirit (Fade Out) perhaps explain its agonising gestation, although Ed O'Brien's internet diary reveals The Smiths as the inspiration for its cascading guitar parts. According to Yorke, "it took 373 days to be arse-about-face enough to realise it was alright the way it was." His cannibalism theme ("Squash his head/Put him in the pot") was, however, a relatively late addition.



Fig. 1: Alice in Wonderland. Thom Yorke's a fan.

MORNING BELL/AMNESIAC

Slowed to funereal pace, Morning Bell/Amnesiac was harder to love than the Kid A version. It was actually recorded first, and later rediscovered. Says Yorke, "We'd launch ideas off and about halfway through them I'd suddenly start screaming, This is bollocks! Stop the tape." Its inclusion here was intended to convey "a recurring dream".

DOLLARS & CENTS

Published in 2000, Naomi Klein's anti-globalisation polemic No Logo [Fig. 2] so influenced Radiohead that they briefly considered it as a working title for Kid A. Yorke, in particular, hardened in his disgust for how capitalism reduced people to "pixels on a screen". Featuring what the singer admitted were "gibberish" lyrics on that theme, this juddering track was modelled on the Krautrock improvisations of '70s German band Can.



Fig. 2: Naomi Klein's No Logo, a key inspiration.

HUNTING BEARS

A haiku-like interlude, with a solitary Thom Yorke on electric guitar and sequenced bass. The bear motif reflects children's fables and the band's new logo, the "modified bear". Yorke has attributed the latter to "a deep paranoia of genetic engineering... you know, creating monsters, only to awaken one morning to the terrible truth that there is nothing at all you can do to stop them."

LIKE SPINNING PLATES

Many of the recording techniques for Kid A/Amnesiac were suggested by what Thom Yorke had read of The Beatles' studio experiments in Ian MacDonald's Revolution In The Head. For Like Spinning Plates, the band took the then-unreleased I Will (it later turned up on Hail To The Thief) and played it backwards. Then Yorke wrote new words that seemed to replicate those backwards sounds when sung normally.

LIFE IN A GLASSHOUSE

Although written back in 1997, the band struggled to make this work until Jonny Greenwood hit on approaching 79-year-old jazz trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton to help out. The results are a bizarre counterpoint to Yorke's impressive rant against tabloid journalism. The line "she is papering the windowpanes" references a story he heard about a celebrity driven to covering her windows with newspapers. The "full version", on the first CD of the Knives Out single, contains a little extra skronking. ■ ROB FEARN

PYRAMID SONG

The clue is in the title: Pyramid Song had its genesis in a visit by Yorke to an Egyptian art exhibition during a two-week sojourn in Copenhagen. According to Colin Greenwood, it was the image of "people being ferried across the river of death" that most affected the singer, whose lyrics imagine "going to heaven in a little row boat" accompanied by "black-eyed angels". The track's chord progression was hammered out on the baby grand Yorke had recently bought in rejection of Radiohead's guitar-led past. Yet all this barely hints at the complex pocket-symphony that Pyramid Song became. Combining the muscular jazz of Charles Mingus with quasi-Eastern strings overdubbed in Oxfordshire's 12th-century Dorchester Abbey, its giddy brilliance is mesmerising.

BEST BIT: That first, ghostly "Ooh-oo-ooo-ooo-oooh" from Yorke, which prefigures the main orchestral theme.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: The squirming sonic undertow is produced by Jonny Greenwood's ondes Martenot, a weird Theremin-like device invented in 1928.

AMNESIAC Producer: Nigel Godrich, Radiohead | Recorded: January 1999 – late 2000, Medley Studios, Copenhagen; Studio Guillaume Tell, Paris; Batsford Park, Glocs; Radiohead HQ, Oxford | Released: 4 June 2001

'WE'D LAUNCH IDEAS
AND HALFWAY THROUGH
THEM I'D SCREAM, THIS IS
BOLLOCKS!' THOM YORKE



Thom Yorke, 2001: his pre-In Rainbows attempts to distribute Radiohead's music were more basic.

B-SIDES & OTHER RECORDINGS

THE AMAZING SOUNDS OF ORGY

Ed O'Brien wrote approvingly of the freedom Radiohead found in working on sounds as a "collective" in the manner of Massive Attack. The comparison is writ large in this trip-hop influenced track concerning, according to Yorke, "an orgy of violence", with a prescient reference to "the day the banks collapsed on us".

AVAILABLE ON: PYRAMID SONG CDI (2001)

TRANS-ATLANTIC DRAWL

Imagine an alternative future in which Radiohead, emboldened by the American success of Creep, opted to go grunge. They

might still be cranking out music along the lines of this gonzo Stooges pastiche, which cuts jarringly to a celestial coda of weird synth drones.

AVAILABLE ON: PYRAMID SONG CDI (2001)

FAST-TRACK

More queasy trip-hop, whose smoky atmosphere, jazzy drumming and chopped up vocals wouldn't be out of place on a DJ Shadow album. Although Ed O'Brien's blog noted a "hyperactive" Thom Yorke "singing along" to this, the final version buries his words deep in the mix.

AVAILABLE ON: PYRAMID SONG CD2 (2001)

KINETIC

The pulsing Kinetic is driven by its Kraftwerkian vocoder sample, while Thom Yorke's dreamy contributions seem to shuffle along in a daze. It's reputed to have been originally earmarked for Kid A, and eventually replaced by Idioteque.

AVAILABLE ON: PYRAMID SONG CD2 (2001)

CUTTOOTH

Only supreme confidence or utter bloody-mindedness can explain why Radiohead tossed this minor masterpiece away on a B-side. Ed O'Brien's blog suggests that Krautrockers Neu! provided the blueprint for its delicious linear chug. Rolling

piano builds throughout, while scratchy rhythms provide extra colour. The line rhyming "tongue tied" and "skinned alive" later resurfaced on Hail To The Thief's Myxomatosis.

AVAILABLE ON: KNIVES OUT CDI (2001)

WORRYWORT

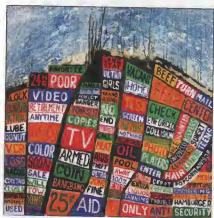
While much of Kid A/Amnesiac mined the dissonant end of the Warp label's electronica, Worrywort is in a parallel tradition of fluttering, blissed-out sound. Curiously upbeat, the lyrics have the flavour of a self-help text (don't dwell on past mistakes, think of the fun you could have), culminating in the line: "It's such a beautiful day".

AVAILABLE ON: KNIVES OUT CD2 (2001)

FOG

Fog started life as a concise piano ballad, Alligators In The New York Sewers, which Yorke unveiled at a gig in Israel in July 2000. It was, he admitted, "kind of a silly song". But while it does detail a ridiculous horror film scenario - "And the fog comes up from the sewers/And glows in the dark" - the final version is a model of measured drama, layering creepy keyboards, tambourine and, finally, a clanging guitar riff over its creaking bassline. Undoubtedly a "lost" classic.

AVAILABLE ON: KNIVES OUT CD2 (2001)



HAIL TO THE THIEF

[PARLOPHONE, 2003]

A “shiny pop record”. In Thom Yorke’s head, at least.

Putting the traumatic Kid A/Amnesiac experience behind them, for their sixth album Radiohead travelled to Hollywood. “It was like a beach vacation,” recalled Thom Yorke of the sessions at Ocean Way studios in Los Angeles. Most of the album was completed in just two weeks. Yet despite Yorke’s claim that it was a “shiny pop record”, its title (widely read as a comment on George W Bush “stealing” the 2000 election) and dense, allusive songs betrayed a mind still buzzing with angst and insight, whether it be from the political fall-out of 9/11 or the joys of fatherhood. Several songs would be premiered – and fine-tuned – on a pre-album tour of Portugal in 2002.

2 + 2 = 5 (THE LUKEWARM)

A decisive shift away from Amnesiac’s abstract electronica, this opens with the sound of Jonny Greenwood plugging in his guitar at Ocean Way studios and builds to an anthemic rock finale worthy of The Bends. It also signposted the album’s lyrical themes, the vision of an Orwellian, post-9/11 world where nothing adds up inspired by Yorke’s compulsive tracking of Radio 4 news bulletins – where he first heard the phrase Hail To The Thief, originally used to describe 19th-century US President John Quincy Adams [Fig. 1].

SIT DOWN. STAND UP (SNAKES & LADDERS)

Premiered, like much of the album, during a summer tour of Portugal, and originally written around the time of OK Computer. The sombre mood reflected Yorke’s horror at the mid-’90s genocide in Rwanda, though the “Look into the jaws of hell” refrain was taken from the book of Common Prayer, a line Yorke said he felt “compelled” to use in a song.

SAIL TO THE MOON (BRUSH THE COBWEBS OUT OF THE SKY)

Amid all the politics and soul-searching, a moment of starry-eyed reflection. Yorke confessed his life had changed radically since the birth of his son Noah in February 2001 and the line “You’ll build an ark and sail us to the moon” was inspired directly by

thoughts of his son’s future. The magic didn’t come easily, though. Jonny Greenwood notes that Yorke’s original sketch “had different chords and only half an idea”. It was Phil Selway who helped finalise the arrangement.

BACKDRIFTS (HONEYMOON IS OVER)

Its title inspired by the aftermath of a snowstorm Yorke witnessed in Japan, this is a direct descendant of the Kid A/Amnesiac sessions, balancing a processed rhythm track and delicate piano melody. Yorke’s vocal continues the album’s themes of social/political impotence and, perhaps preparing for accusations the band might be running short on energy or ideas, delivers the line “We’re damaged goods” with particular relish.

GO TO SLEEP (LITTLE MAN BEING ERASED)

“We wanted to make the sort of sounds that get you up in the morning and... have a positive energy,” Yorke noted of the sessions in California. “It was the most fun we’ve had in the studio.” A mood reflected in the upbeat urgency of a song that collides West Coast folk strumming with a pin-balling Jonny Greenwood solo achieved by running his guitar through a randomising computer program.

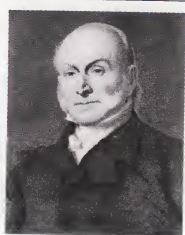


Fig. 1: US President John Adams – the original ‘thief’ of the title.



Fig. 2: An ondes Martenot, as used by Jonny Greenwood.

WHERE I END AND YOU BEGIN (THE SKY IS FALLING IN)

Radiohead songs typically display complex DNA and this reflection on anxieties personal and political is no exception. Dedicated to Jeanne Lorient, an early performer on Jonny Greenwood’s favourite instrument the ondes Martenot [Fig. 2], it references on both Joy Division (the ominous bassline) and children’s nursery story Chicken Licken, in which a flock of deluded poultry are lured into a fox’s den – a favourite of Yorke and his brother Andrew when they were boys.

WE SUCK YOUNG BLOOD (YOUR TIME IS UP)

Gothic reflection on Hollywood’s parasitic relation to youth. The funereal pace and handclaps were inspired by Charles Mingus’s 1963 jazz protest Freedom and sound suitably gloomy given the morbid theme. Yet Yorke also insisted it

shouldn’t be taken too seriously: “That fast bit on the piano, its ridiculous. You can’t get chin-scratchy about that. It makes me laugh.”

THE GLOAMING (SOFTLY OPEN OUR MOUTHS IN THE COLD)

A song that dates back to the summer of 2002 when each band member received a package from Yorke containing three CD-R discs filled with sketches labelled Episcopal, Hold Your Prize and The Gloaming – “a very out of fashion word for twilight” as Yorke put it. Touted as a title track for the album, it remains more a mood piece than a conventional song, with Yorke conjuring a nightmare vision of being sucked down “to the other side” over twitching electronica programmed by the Greenwood brothers.

I WILL (NO MAN’S LAND)

Yorke has described this hymn-like reflection on the US military’s bombing of the Amiriyah air raid shelter in Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War (which killed over 400 civilians) as “The angriest thing I’ve ever written.” The shortest song on an album where the band were determined to keep it tight. “If we recorded a track that stretched over three minutes and 50 seconds,” said Colin Greenwood, “we’d say, Oh fuck, we’ve bugged it then.”

A PUNCH-UP AT A WEDDING (NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO)

There might be an expansive feel to the opening piano chords here, but feelings of unease become evident long before the distorted conclusion. While the bitter social observations (“You had to piss on our parade”) hinge once more on Yorke’s unsparing self-awareness and role as an outsider. “I hadn’t realised how angry it all was until afterwards,” he said when asked

THERE THERE (THE BONEY KING OF NOWHERE)

With its layered guitar parts and epic structure, Hail To The Thief’s first single seemed to mark a return to the visionary rock of OK Computer. But there were added complexities, from Yorke’s invocation of a mysterious siren “singing you to shipwreck” to the Krautrock-inspired drumming he identified as a homage to Can’s landmark 1971 album Tago Mago. First performed during a webcast while the band were recording Kid A, the lyrical warnings against temptation also took on added resonance thanks to the recent birth of Yorke’s son (its subtitle is taken from a song in an episode of ’70s children’s animation Bagpuss) and a brilliant stop-animated video directed by Chris Hopewell which saw Yorke trapped in a fairy-tale forest.

BEST BIT: The Jonny Greenwood solo four minutes in – one of his very best.

STRANGE BUT TRUE: When Thom Yorke heard the final mix at the band’s studio in Oxfordshire, he was moved to tears.



'I HADN'T REALISED HOW ANGRY IT ALL WAS UNTIL AFTERWARDS.' THOM YORKE

about the album's underlying tensions. "It was like, Fucking hell... It wasn't intentional."

MYXOMATOSIS (JUDGE, JURY & EXECUTIONER)

Announced by a snarling synth riff, Myxomatosis features a narrator seemingly unable to make sense of his own experience. "Paranoid, miserable, that's me, isn't it? That's my job," said Yorke wryly when asked to comment on the song's ambivalent attitude to stardom. And while the title refers to the virus that decimated Britain's wild rabbit population in the '50s, Yorke insists it was chosen for how it sounds, not what it means: "The song is actually about mind control."

SCATTERBRAIN (AS DEAD AS LEAVES)

Lilting number, which again reflects Yorke's intense monitoring of the news prior to recording, in particular his habit of walking in the countryside with a portable radio: "Out in the middle of nowhere, the media is really amplified – it's like being permanently on drugs." Hence the links between natural forces (wind, hail) and images of conflict (bullets). Elsewhere, the lyric about "Yesterday's headlines blown by the wind" derives from a passage in Thomas Pynchon's labyrinthine 1963 novel *V*, about the search for a mysterious vanished woman.

A WOLF AT THE DOOR (IT GIRL. RAG DOLL)

This verbal outpouring from the Kid A sessions is, according to Yorke, "about fear – real or imagined". Inspired both by a ragga mix-tape the singer was given by a friend and his experience of coming close to "a complete nervous breakdown", it was the Beethoven-inspired waltz created by Jonny Greenwood that provided the catalyst: "Thom basically started shouting on top of it." ■ RUPERT HOWE

AMNESIAC Producer: Nigel Godrich, Radiohead | Recorded: Sept 2002-Feb 2003 at Ocean Way, Los Angeles; Radiohead HQ, Oxford | Released: 9 June 2003

B-SIDES & OTHER RECORDINGS

PAPERBAG WRITER

Unexpectedly funky adjunct to the Hail To The Thief sessions, driven by a popping bassline and mambo rhythm. The title is an ironic reference to Yorke's Beatles fixation – as are the lush Abbey Road strings – though the lyrics read like the troubled frontman having a conversation with himself: "Take your armour off, you're not under attack."

AVAILABLE ON: THERE THERE SINGLE (2003)

WHERE BLUEBIRDS FLY

Constructed around an Aphex Twin-like beat, which carries echoes of the electronic rhythm driving Sit Down. Stand Up, this wordless experiment finds Yorke choosing lyrics not for what they mean, but for how they sound. The band often used Where Bluebirds Fly as their intro music while touring Hail To The Thief in 2002 and 2003.

AVAILABLE ON: THERE THERE SINGLE (2003)

I AM CITIZEN INSANE

Pulsing electronic instrumental, its hazy, dreamlike harmonics reminiscent of ambient pioneers Boards Of Canada. The lack of a Yorke vocal means it feels a little like an unfinished sketch from the Kid A/Amnesiac era.

AVAILABLE ON: GO TO SLEEP SINGLE (2003)

GAGGING ORDER

In contrast to the electronic out-takes used as B-sides on

There There, a disarmingly simple and affecting song performed solo by Yorke on acoustic guitar. Originally titled Move Along (from the line, "Move along, there's nothing left to see"), it dates from the Kid A sessions – in his online diary for 1999 Ed O'Brien recalls Yorke playing it to the band in the studio before continuing work on In Limbo.

AVAILABLE ON: GO TO SLEEP SINGLE CD2 (2003)

I AM A WICKED CHILD

Originally performed during an internet broadcast in 2000, this has a loose, bluesy feel, accentuated by Jonny Greenwood's over-the-top harmonica and lines like "I am the Devil's son" and "I walk the crooked mile". Utterly out of character with the precision of their album work, but more intriguing for it.

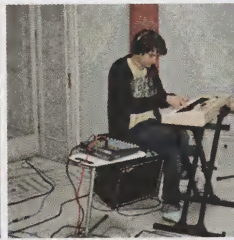
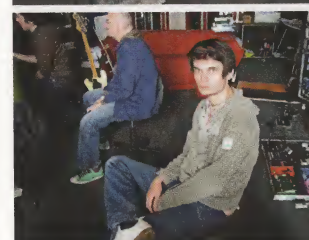
AVAILABLE ON: GO TO SLEEP SINGLE CD2 (2003)



THE



REVOLUTION



They'd already changed music. With *In Rainbows*, Radiohead changed the music industry.

WORDS: STEPHEN ARMSTRONG



HOW DID THEY DO IT?

On Monday 1 October, a message from Jonny Greenwood appeared on Radiohead's website, *Dead Air Space*. "Hello everyone. Well, the new album is finished, and it's coming out in 10 days. We've called it *In Rainbows*. Love from us all."

If the suddenness of the release was surprising, then the method of distribution was unprecedented. The 10-track album would be available to download from the website from 10 October, with users setting their own price, from nothing up to a maximum price of £99.99. It would also be available on 3 December as a £40 "discbox", with bonus CD, vinyl discs, artwork and lyrics. "It's the biggest example to date of a group at the height of its fame circumventing traditional record labels to deliver a major recording to consumers," noted *Fortune* magazine.

Radiohead had long been using the internet to their advantage. They had been broadcasting webcasts since 2002, while their *Waste* fanclub had developed into an online merchandise and ticketing site with a database of more than 300,000 fans.

But releasing an album online was still a huge jump in their ambitions. It wouldn't have happened if *Terra Firma*, who took

over their parent label EMI in May 2007, had been more flexible in negotiating with the band. "We couldn't move ahead with EMI because [*Terra Firma* head/Guy Hands refused to discuss the [*back*]/catalogue in any meaningful way," Radiohead manager Bryce Edge told *The Times* in December 2007.

The seeds of *In Rainbows* stemmed from a "philosophical conversation about the value of music" between Edge and co-manager Chris Hufford following 2003's *Hail To The Thief*. In April 2007, at a band summit in Oxford, Edge and Hufford proposed releasing only the download and a deluxe boxset, but the band overruled them, arguing that many of its fans are neither downloaders nor elite collectors. The details were subsequently hammered out in a series of meetings.

"The two parameters were: we've finished the record and we want people to hear it now; and we want everyone to get the music at the same time," explained Edge. "The internet was the only way we could do that. But how do you value a download? So we had to offer the pay-what-you-want option, which became the story."

They moved quickly from idea to delivery. Two days after the album was mastered it was available for pre-order on

the site. The financial infrastructure was already in place thanks to *Waste*. To ensure security and make sure the album downloaded quickly, they hired a private internet network; a collection of servers and connections that meant for most of the distance between *Waste*'s Oxford-based servers and the fan's computer, the download effectively had a high-speed cable all to itself. Edge admitted this cottage-industry approach could have failed.

"We had two servers struggling to sort the database stuff and the financial transaction," he said. "We couldn't have five million people downloading it because if too many people came on it just crashed."

On 8 November, Radiohead announced the release of a conventional CD through XL Recordings on New Year's Eve. Thom Yorke confirmed that this had been a condition of doing the whole project.

"It probably costs a small six-figure sum to handle the financial transactions, but that's nothing compared to the overall sums changing hands," says James Kirkham, director of digital marketing agency Holler, whose clients include Nike and Channel 4. "They've got all the royalties and all the rights, plus all those new names on their database. That's unprecedented."



DID IT WORK?

In Rainbows' unique distribution and "charity box" model instantly became headline news. On the morning of 10 October, everyone who cared was hearing it for the first time: for once, fans got it at the same time as file sharers or journalists.

For all the fuss, it was ultimately a clever marketing exercise. Edge and Hufford admitted the pay-what-you-like download was a ploy to drive sales from the outset. "If we didn't believe that when people heard the music they would want to buy the CD, then we wouldn't do what we are doing," says Edge.

The strategy seems to have paid off. The physical album sold 44,602 copies in its first week in the UK – fewer than Kid A's first-day sales of 55,000, but impressive given the music business's current woes. The band haven't revealed how many albums were downloaded or how much people paid for each download, but reports suggest that it averages out at around £3 per album.

"Radiohead are the first major artist to realise the true value of monetising their fans' social behaviour by allowing multiple choices of consumption," says Terry McBride, manager of Dido and Avril Lavigne. "By letting the fans decide how they want to purchase they have walked

away with more money from this than any previous release with EMI."

The ripples spread immediately. In November, US rapper Saul Williams released his Trent Reznor-produced album *The Inevitable Rise & Fall Of Niggy Tardust* online. Fans were given the option to download a medium-quality MP3 version for nothing or pay \$5 for a high-quality version. "In the first three months we shifted 200,000 copies for free and 50,000 paid for," says Williams. "Everyone's

learning from what they [Radiohead] did. The next attempt will be different again."

Also following Radiohead's lead are The Charlatans, who released their single *You Cross My Path* for free via Xfm's website in October 2007 and plan to do the same with their new album. "Physical sales are decreasing," says Alan McGee, The Charlatans' manager and ex-Creation Records boss. "The band will get paid more by more people coming to gigs, buying merchandise, publishing and sync fees [for appearing on ads and in films]. I believe it's the future business model."

For Radiohead, the model isn't quite that simple. According to Music Week, ticket and merchandise sales account for around 60 per cent of their income, with the remainder coming from record sales. But that 40 per cent is relatively high compared to their peers, as Radiohead tour less frequently than many other bands. While *In Rainbows* was a success on both a marketing and financial level, it's not clear whether they'll do the same again.

"We've always said it's an experiment in progress," admitted Bryce Edge. "Any band worth their salt will work out what is right for them and give it a go. I'm not saying we've come up with a solution, but it seems to have a logic to it." ■

In Rainbows_In Numbers

9 days between album being announced and being made available to download

45p transaction fee for anyone opting to pay for the download

£2.93 average amount paid for download by fans worldwide, according to online pollster comScore

15 number of people who paid the maximum price of £99.99 for the downloadable album

44,602 first-week sales of *In Rainbows* physical CD in the UK (compared to 112,000 for 2003's *Hail To The Thief*)

IN / RAINBOWS
IN RAINBOWS
IN RAINBOWS
IN RAINBOWS
IN RAINBOWS
RADIOHEAD
RADIO HEAD

IN RAINBOWS

[XL, 2007]

Still revolutionary after all these years.

The headline-grabbing “charity box” approach to its online release and £40 discbox edition diverted attention away from the fact that *In Rainbows* was Radiohead’s most approachable album since *OK Computer*. This was partly down to Thom Yorke exorcising his experimental urges on 2006 solo album, *The Eraser*, an outlet for ideas that didn’t fit within Radiohead’s remit. Not that recording was free of trauma: it took 28 months, four studios and two producers to make. Early sessions with U2 associate Mark “Spike” Stent were unproductive. It was only when Nigel Godrich – initially deemed “too safe” – was brought back on board in October 2005 and sessions moved to Tottenham House, a stately home in Wiltshire, that *In Rainbows* began to gel. For once, even the band were satisfied with the results. “It’s the first record where I’m still listening to my six favourite songs,” said Jonny Greenwood. “That’s a good sign.”

15 STEP

Initially assembled on Yorke’s laptop, the glitchy, 5/4 time introductory percussion echoed Kid A’s sense of experimentation, but the arrival of Yorke’s tuneful falsetto and deftly picked guitar lent the song a more carefree atmosphere. The track’s surprise moment was supplied towards the end by a group of cheering children from Oxford’s Matrix Music School & Arts Centre, handily close to the band’s own studio, recorded by Colin Greenwood and Nigel Godrich.

BODYSNATCHERS

In *Rainbows*’s most propulsive track, complete with motorik beat reminiscent of Krautrock pioneers Neu! and a wall of fuzzy guitars. Written in 2005 it took more than a year before the recording finally came right during the band’s draughty two-month stay at Tottenham House. According to Ed O’Brien, *Bodysnatchers* reflected “the weird energy of the house”, which was formerly a rehab centre for recovering heroin addicts.

NUDE

Written during the *OK Computer* sessions and occasionally performed live, *Nude* was originally titled *Big Ideas* (Don’t Get Any). Yorke had previously found it uncomfortable to sing “because it was too feminine”, but eventually grew to like it “because it brings out something in me.” The studio recording of 2007 glided in on a cushion of ethereal strings and heavenly voices before settling into a gently hiccupping waltz-time groove. It sounded like a love song but wasn’t, as the line “you’ll go to hell for what your dirty mind is thinking” proved.

WEIRD FISHES/ARPEGGI

This song made its first public appearance at the Ether Festival of experimental music on London’s South Bank in 2005 where it was



Fig. 1: The late Nick Drake – his spirit hovers over *Faust Arp*.

performed as a duet by Yorke and Jonny Greenwood. The final take, completed at the band’s own studio in spring 2007, added another arpeggio guitar, some celeste from Greenwood, J, and a scampering drum part in which Phil Selway offered a pin-sharp impersonation of a drum machine.

ALL I NEED

Yorke’s decision to put his voice centre stage was key to resolving the problems that beset the recording of the album and no track benefited from it more than this one, arguably Radiohead’s most uncomplicated love song. Colin Greenwood’s slow and stately fuzz bass and brother Jonny’s string arrangement – scored, he claimed, to imitate white noise – were carefully positioned in the mix to leave plenty of space around Yorke’s heartfelt vocal.

FAUST ARP

The ghost of Nick Drake [Fig. 1] hovers over this track. The combination of intricately picked acoustic guitar and swelling cello recalled the sound palette of Drake’s Bryter Layter, as did the restlessly shifting major-to-minor chords and abrupt

changes in rhythmic emphasis. One of the album’s shortest tracks, coming in at just over two minutes, the grumpy tone of the lyrics – “I’m stuffed... I love you but enough is enough” etc – was belied by the apologetic tenderness of Yorke’s delivery. His lyrics were edited down from “pages and pages” of notes.

RECKONER

What sounded like a roomful of rattling percussion, joined in due course by more arpeggiated acoustic guitar – In *Rainbows*’s signature accompaniment – formed the prelude to Yorke’s layered falsetto. A not-quite lament that changed shape over various sessions, the song’s mood of fragile optimism was boosted by the arrival of Jonny Greenwood’s strings later on, a warm blast of aural sunshine mirrored in the lyric, “Because we separate, it ripples our reflections in rainbows”.

HOUSE OF CARDS

One of their most straightforward song structures, the arrangement here was built around a syncopated one-chord strum with woozy synths adding distant support. Yorke’s languorous vocal stretched out like a cat on a bed while his lyric alluded darkly to wife-swapping parties: “Throw your keys in the bowl/Kiss your husband goodnight”. The reverb effect on the vocal was captured by Nigel Godrich in one of the rooms in Tottenham House.

VIDEOTAPE

“Less is more” was a lesson learned during the recording of this melancholy piano tune at Godrich’s London studio, The Hospital, in December 2006. With Yorke temporarily sent out of the room for being, in his words, “a negative influence”, Jonny Greenwood and Godrich hacked away at a cluttered arrangement, creating a thing of desolate beauty that moved at glacial speed but packed a powerful emotional punch. Yorke admitted that with “all the nonsense” stripped away “it completely blew my mind”.



Fig. 2: Longtime Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich.

JIGSAW FALLING INTO PLACE

The first song to be completed after Nigel Godrich [Fig. 2] came back on board, and the album’s lead single. Its beauty lay in the contrast between the shuffling urgency of the instrumentation – a simple Unplugged-style arrangement of mainly acoustic guitar, bass and drums with a lofty blast of orchestral synths at the end – and the insistently dreamy repetition of the vocal melody. The key lines, “What’s the point of instruments/Words are a sawn-off shotgun” hinted at the travails and self-doubt that preceded the making of this song and the album as a whole.

BEST BIT: Yorke singing, “Come on and let it out” above a confusion of frantically busy guitars.
STRANGE BUT TRUE: The lyrics were inspired by Yorke’s fascination with binge drinkers in Oxford, partly born out of his own chronic inability to hold his drink. “Half a can of lager and Thom’s gone,” reported one associate.



'THEIR MOST APPROACHABLE ALBUM SINCE OK COMPUTER.'

'DISCBOX' EXTRA TRACKS

MK I

Minute-long intro to In Rainbows's bonus disc, only available as part of the boxset released two months after the original album was made available online [Fig. 3]. More sound sketch or laptop doodle than fully formed piece, its atonal, swirling textures resolved at the end into a fragment of the piano figure from Videotape.

DOWN IS THE NEW UP

Opens with a sturdy piano riff and charges off in several prog rock-ish directions thereafter, before fetching up in a weird, fake soul place, this track was a particular favourite of Thom Yorke's "because it's pretty radical". A shade too radical for In Rainbows was evidently the collective verdict.

GO SLOWLY

Hard to see why this didn't make it onto the A-list since its mixture of acoustic guitar, heavenly celestes and Yorke's dreamy falsetto locate it in an adjacent space musically to Weir

Fishes and Faust Arp. The song's main arranger Jonny Greenwood fought for its inclusion but was overruled.

MK 2

As with Mk I, this abstract, 60-second sound painting said a lot more about the circumstances in which many of the songs on In Rainbows began than it did about where they ended up.

LAST FLOWERS

Originally recorded during the OK Computer sessions but never released, another version was shortlisted by Yorke for his solo album The Eraser – hence the band's feeling that it wasn't right, even in re-recorded form, for In Rainbows. Its lovely piano-led melody wouldn't have sounded out of place located right next to Karma Police on OK Computer.

UP ON THE LADDER

A thumping 4/4 beat and a discordant guitar dominated a tune that, despite its airborne, synth

chorus and late-developing dub bassline, never quite shakes off its doom-laden atmosphere. Originally written for Kid A and performed live in 2002, it sounded like a ghost from Radiohead's recent past.

BANGERS + MASH

With its jerky, repetitive guitar riff and clattering drum part, this aggressive post-punk-influenced track would have fitted an album made up of songs like Bodysnatchers. Sadly for this track it wasn't where Radiohead were headed on In Rainbows. It has great live potential, though.

4 MINUTE WARNING

The booming introductory acoustics may have been out of character, but only a band with Radiohead's propensity for self-criticism could have ruled this beautiful, hymn-like melody to be below par. ■ ROBERT SANDALL



Fig. 3: That limited-edition £40 In Rainbows boxset in full.

IN RAINBOWS Producer: Nigel Godrich | Recorded: February 2005 – June 2007; Hospital Studio, London; Halswell House, Somerset; Tottenham House, Wiltshire; Radiohead HQ, Oxford | Released: 10 October 2007 (online), 31 December 2007 (in stores)

MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS

Side projects, solo outings and the best of what's in the vaults.

UNRELEASED TRACKS

BIG BOOTS (AKA MAN-O-WAR)

Written for The Bends and also considered for OK Computer. A clip of the band working on it features in 1998 tour documentary *Meeting People Is Easy*. "We could never find the proper way into it," said Yorke.

FOLLOW ME AROUND

Prescient, pre-Iraq dig at the British government: "Did you lie to us, Tony?/We thought you were different". Featured briefly in *Meeting People Is Easy* and aired on subsequent tours.

GOOD MORNING MR MAGPIE/ MORNIN' M'LUD

Strident acoustic track, as performed by a solo Thom Yorke during the Radiohead TV webcast of December 2002.

I FROZE UP

Premiered during the Radiohead TV webcast. Stark, electric piano-led lullaby that uses the modern world as a metaphor for a crumbling relationship ("You're the light wiping out my batteries...").

LIFT

OK Computer-era ballad that offsets its claustrophobic lyrical theme of being trapped in an elevator with a spacey emptiness.

RECKONER (AKA FEELING PULLED APART BY HORSES)

Post-OK Computer rant dating from 2000 (sample lyric: "Feeling pulled apart by horses/ Fobbed off with shite lame excuses"). A later second half eventually became the *In Rainbows* track *Reckoner*.

SPOOKS

Short instrumental aired during their 2006 world tour. Sounds like the theme to a spy film, hence the title.

TRUE LOVE WAITS

Atypically tender Thom York solo acoustic showcase only available on 2001 live album *I Might Be Wrong*. Revived during 2006 tour, with Yorke transferring from guitar to synthesizer.

COLLABORATIONS

EL PRESIDENT Drugstore

Former Radiohead touring partners enlist Thom Yorke for a duet with Brazilian-born singer Isabel Monteiro set against the backdrop of revolution in South America.

AVAILABLE ON: WHITE MAGIC FOR LOVERS (ROADRUNNER, 1998)

WISH YOU WERE HERE Sparklehorse

US mavericks' cover of Pink Floyd chestnut, from skateboarding flick *Lords Of Dogtown*. Yorke adds backing vocals, recorded down a phone line.

AVAILABLE ON: LORDS OF DOGTOWN (Geffen, 2004)

RABBIT IN YOUR HEADLIGHTS UNKLE

Eerie, Yorke-fronted highlight of patchy debut album from DJ Shadow and James Lavelle's vanity project, and an early pointer to his burgeoning interest in electronic music.

AVAILABLE ON: PSYENCE FICTION (MO'WAX, 1998)

2HB/LADYTRON/BITTER-SWEET/ BABY'S ON FIRE/TUMBLING DOWN Venus In Furs

Faux-glam supergroup – featuring Yorke, Jonny Greenwood, Bernard Butler and Roxy Music saxophonist Andy Mackay – cover two Roxy songs, and tracks by Bryan Ferry, Brian Eno and Steve Harley for the *Velvet Goldmine* movie.

AVAILABLE ON: VELVET GOLDMINE (Fontana, 1998)

I'VE SEEN IT ALL Björk

Stark duet between Björk and Yorke, taken from the soundtrack to director Lars Von Trier's harrowing *Dancer In The Dark*. Bagged an Oscar nomination for Best Original Song.

AVAILABLE ON: SELMASONGS (ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2000)

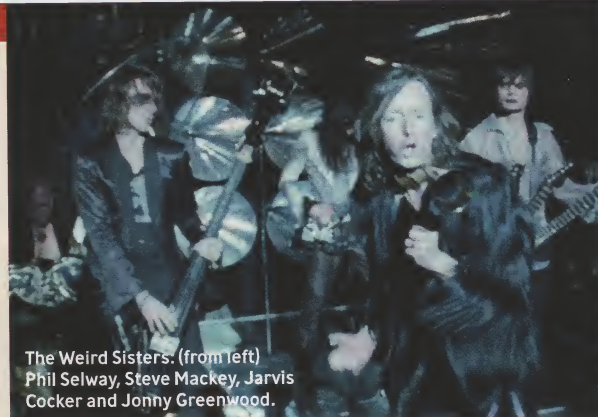
THIS MESS WE'RE IN PJ Harvey

Harvey and Yorke are lovers adrift in the alien landscape of Manhattan. Yorke adds backing vocals to *One Line* and *Beautiful Feeling* too.

AVAILABLE ON: STORIES FROM THE CITY, STORIES FROM THE SEA (ISLAND, 2000)

DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS? Band Aid 20

Anaemic, Nigel Godrich-produced update of



The Weird Sisters. (from left) Phil Selway, Steve Mackey, Jarvis Cocker and Jonny Greenwood.

the daddy of all charity singles, featuring Jonny Greenwood and a piano-playing Thom Yorke alongside members of The Darkness.

AVAILABLE ON: DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS? (MERCURY SINGLE, 2004)

PLATFORM BLUES/BILLIE Pavement

Jonny Greenwood adds harmonica to two tracks on Godrich-produced swansong album from wonky US indie-rock stalwarts.

AVAILABLE ON: TERROR TWILIGHT (MATADOR, 1999)

HIROSHIMA Bryan Ferry

Greenwood adds apocalyptic guitar to stand-out track from Ferry's 2002 album, *Frantic*.

AVAILABLE ON: FRANTIC (VIRGIN, 2002)

1000 MIRRORS Asian Dub Foundation

Ed O'Brien hooks up with London agit-rappers ADF and guest vocalist Sinéad O'Connor for a tale of domestic violence.

AVAILABLE ON: ENEMY OF MY ENEMY (FFRR, 2003)

DO THE HIPPOGRIFF/MAGIC WORKS/ THIS IS THE NIGHT The Weird Sisters

Jonny Greenwood, Phil Selway and Pulp's Jarvis Cocker and Steve Mackey in fictional band from *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*. A hoot if their cameo is anything to go by.

AVAILABLE ON: HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE (REPRISE, 2005)

THE WHITE FLASH Modeselektor

Yorke pushes the button marked "experimental" on collaboration with Berlin techno pranksters Modeselektor.

AVAILABLE ON: HAPPY BIRTHDAY! (BPITCH CONTROL, 2007)

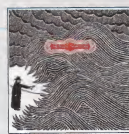
SOLO ALBUMS



BODYSONG Jonny Greenwood

[PARLOPHONE, 2003]

Fittingly exploratory soundtrack to director Simon Pummell's documentary about the human body. Electronics, strings, horns and, on a handful of tracks, brother Colin all add to the sense of controlled experimentalism.



THE ERASER Thom Yorke

[XL, 2006]

Yorke's debut solo album:

an outlet for his more experimental urges during the *In Rainbows* sessions. Finds our hero in full "prophet of doom" mode, predicting environmental apocalypse and the end of the world in general.



THERE WILL BE BLOOD Jonny Greenwood

[NONESUCH, 2007]

Soundtrack to Daniel Day Lewis film. Came about after director Paul Thomas Anderson heard Greenwood's *Popcorn Superhet Receiver*. Nominated for an Oscar, only to be disqualified for featuring a track from *Bodysong*.

Thom Yorke: 'The end of the world is nigh, etc.'

